

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

Introduction

The interview questions that follow are a combination of both behavioral and puzzle questions listed according to the attributes you may be seeking or wanting to avoid in a candidate. As you might expect, a particular question might be useful under several different attribute headings. For example, a query such as “What mechanisms have you put in place so that typical problems likely to occur on your job do not surface again?” might be used to assess time management awareness, management competence, decision-making and analytical skills, as well as the ability to take initiative. You may therefore see the same question listed under several different attribute categories.

Directions

The attributes are listed below in alphabetical order. When you click on a particular attribute, the screen will show you a brief paragraph explaining and clarifying the attribute, along with a list of fifteen to twenty applicable interview questions targeting that quality. Select the question or questions you wish to use, then just cut and paste them into the document you are creating.

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Adaptable and Flexible

Because every company is continuously changing and growing, you want to hire people who do the same. You need candidates who invite and welcome change, people who understand that change is a part of the everyday life of an organization that believes in continuous improvement. Such people adjust quickly and positively to change. In addition, an adaptable candidate who will show a willingness to take on challenges not specifically within his or her work responsibilities. Generally, such candidates know how to manage their time well so that extra assignments are not a burden. In addition, they are open-minded when presented with perspectives different from their own. Here are some questions that may help identify such individuals.

- “Some people are said to roll with the punches. Describe a situation in which you demonstrated this sort of skill in dealing with people.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Some work situations require that we work with people we dislike. Tell me about an occasion on which you overcame a personality conflict to achieve results.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Please describe a situation that demonstrates your flexibility.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a situation in which more responsibility was thrust on you unexpectedly.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Suppose you were given a project that required you to learn a new skill. How would you start?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What do you do when what you are doing isn’t working out?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when your boss presented you with a task that was unrelated to your job and that put you behind in terms of your own work. What did you do?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Suppose you were involved in a task that was estimated to reach completion with one week’s worth of effort, and halfway through you realized that, even with three weeks of effort, the project would not be completed. What options might be available to you for dealing with that situation? Which one would you choose? Why?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about the circumstances under which you accepted assistance from someone outside your area on something that was distinctly your personal responsibility.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What responsibility—if any—do you believe you have toward people in other areas of the company? How should those responsibilities be carried out?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What strategies have you used in order to allow for unexpected changes in your work plans?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe a situation in which you dealt successfully with unwanted changes that the organization had thrust on you.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you were in the middle of a project and your boss required your expertise on another task. What did you do about the first project?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe a situation for which there was a good deal to learn before you were up to speed and you were facing a tight time frame. What strategies did you use to learn and then accomplish the task within the assigned time frame?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe for me how you have had to reinvent yourself and your skill set in order to meet the company’s changing needs.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about any proactive steps you have taken in the past in order to assume broader responsibilities.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Give me an example of how you were able to adapt to an unexpected and unwanted change in your organization.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you were forced to assume responsibilities that were distinctly outside your assigned commitments, experience, and knowledge.” *[behavioral question]*

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Ambition and Goal Oriented (Personal Career Goals)

Isn't it interesting that no interviewer will admit to needing drones; everyone wants candidates who express a desire to move up, to become managers, to be promotable. Certainly you would agree, however, that you also need drones, people who want to work at the same dull job year after year after year, people who have no desire whatsoever for promotion or additional responsibilities, people who would never leave for a better opportunity because that better opportunity is right here. These questions can help you differentiate the drones from the ambitious, fast-track candidates.

- "What long-term career goals have you set for yourself? Why those particular goals?" *[behavioral question]*
- "I'd be interested to learn when you last reviewed and updated your long-term career goals. What influenced you to reevaluate them? What specific changes did you make? Why?" *[behavioral question]*
- "What standards have you used in the past to measure your personal career success?" *[behavioral question]*
- "What would you say is the most important thing you are looking for in a job? How would you know that we could provide you with that?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What, if anything, have you been doing in terms of self-development to prepare yourself for future opportunities and challenges? Why those particular activities?" *[behavioral question]*
- "If you had all the money you could ever use and you still wanted to 'keep busy,' what would you choose to do?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What did you hope to find in your previous job that was unavailable and that you hope to find here?" *[puzzle question]*
- "If you could write your own job description, what would you include in it?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What would you like to accomplish for yourself in this organization?" *[puzzle question]*
- "Why do you want this job?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What do you think you can accomplish for the organization?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What does a job have to entail in order to satisfy you?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What aspects of a job do you find most attractive? Why?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What gives you the greatest satisfaction on a job?" *[puzzle question]*
- "Tell me about any goals you set for yourself over the past twelve months. How did you happen to select those particular objectives?" *[behavioral question]*
- "What are your long-term career expectations? How does this position fit into those plans?" *[puzzle question]*
- "How have you kept track of your progress toward the achievement of your career goals?" *[behavioral question]*
- "How have you gained support for your goals from your previous bosses?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Please tell me about the best job you ever had. What made it 'the best'? How did you get the job in the first place?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Tell me about a time when you volunteered to do something totally outside your normal responsibilities. Why did you volunteer? How did it work out?" *[behavioral question]*
- "How does this position relate to your career goals?" *[puzzle question]*

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Analytical Skills and Decision Making

Decision making, the process of making a conscious choice of one alternative from a group of alternatives, is one of the measures of a superior candidate. In today's world, you certainly could not give someone an important job without first considering whether or not he or she could gather facts, analyze data, and reason things out systematically. The astute candidate knows that decisions cannot be made in a vacuum; attention must be given to how each decision may impact others in the organization. The following questions will assist you in assessing such abilities.

- "Would you describe yourself as a logical or an intuitive problem solver?" *[puzzle question]*
"Please give me an example from your previous job that illustrates your choice." *[behavioral question]*
- "Describe a situation in which you had to be analytical and thorough in making a critical decision. Walk me through the process you followed." *[behavioral question]*
- "What led you to come in for this interview today?" *[puzzle question]*
- "Suppose it turns out that we offer you the position. How will you decide whether to accept?" *[puzzle question]*
- "Tell me about a time in your life when you had mixed feelings about what to do. How did you sort things out so that you could arrive at some closure?" *[behavioral question]*
- "How is it that you are pursuing this line of work rather than some other?" *[puzzle question]*
- "Describe for me the most significant decision you have made in your life. What made it significant? Describe the process you used in making it?" *[behavioral question]*
- "When you are deciding whether to try something totally new, what weight do you give to the probability of success?" *[puzzle question]*
- "On previous jobs, what was the basis on which you determined to take on tasks, projects, or responsibilities that were not assigned to you or even expected of you?" *[behavioral question]*
- "What influenced you to seek a new employment opportunity at this point in your career?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Tell me about a decision you made where things did not turn out as well as you had anticipated they would." *[behavioral question]* "Why did things not turn out as you expected they would? In retrospect, what do you think you should have done differently?" *[puzzle question]*
- "Suppose you were in the process of hiring an assistant for yourself and you had two equally qualified and acceptable candidates. What strategies would you use in selecting one over the other?" *[puzzle question]*
- "Tell me about a time when an employee from another department was disrupting the productivity of your staff. What alternatives did you assume you had for handling the situation? Which alternative did you choose? Why?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Tell me about the most complex business decision you have ever had to make. I'd be interested in hearing how you went about making it and exactly what made it so complex." *[behavioral question]*
- "Please give me an example of how your analytical abilities enabled you to sort out a difficult situation." *[behavioral question]*
- "Some people rely on their intuitive abilities for their decision making, while others rely only on objective facts. Then there are those who use some combination of the two. What kind of a decision maker do you consider yourself to be?" *[puzzle question]* "Please give me an example of each strategy from your previous job." *[behavioral question]*

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Assertive

An assertive person is meticulously clear in expressing him- or herself. Others always know exactly what it is the person wants and expects or where he or she stands on a particular issue. Assertive communication is characterized by setting boundaries and then inviting the other person to participate in negotiating any differences through responsible confrontation. An assertive person is honest, forthright, and not offensive. He or she knows how to be a strong advocate of his or her own ideas, without infringing on the convictions of others. Assertive people accomplish this in a non-defensive, professional, and unemotional manner that is respectful of others. Here are some questions that may help you identify such individuals.

- “Tell me about a time when you had an idea that you knew would solve a complicated problem and your boss was not interested in hearing about it. What did you do to capture your boss’s attention?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Suppose you learned that a peer in another area was making fallacious comments to upper management about the competency of you and your staff. What would you do to rectify the situation?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Describe a situation where you advanced an idea or strategy at a meeting. When your boss and peers heard what you had to say, their reaction was very negative. How did you deal with such a negative onslaught?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about the most challenging confrontational situation you have ever come up against involving a staff member. What made the situation so inflammatory? How did you handle it?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What has been your experience dealing with a situation in which two of your staff members were locked in a conflict that impacted the entire group?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Suppose you discover that your most capable and valuable employee has done something unethical or totally against company policy. What would you do?” *[puzzle question]* “How have you handled such situations in the past?” *[behavioral question]*
- “On previous jobs, when you discovered organizational practices or procedures that you felt were damaging to employee morale and/or customer satisfaction, what did you do?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe a situation in which you had to challenge someone who was not acting in the best interests of the organization and its guiding principles.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you resolved to pursue a course of action you believed in, despite opposition from others.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Obviously a person cannot battle over every aggravating situation. I’d be interested to learn what kinds of circumstances or events you have selected on which to take a stand. Why did you choose those particular issues?” *[behavioral question]*
- “In a situation where you and a co-worker have had a serious difference of opinion, what strategies have you used to resolve your differences?” *[behavioral question]*
- “In the past, how have you handled a situation when a co-worker was doing something you found to be personally offensive (criticizing one of the staff members in front of others; making prejudiced remarks; telling off-color jokes; etc.)?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Suppose you and a peer were discussing a distressing topic. As you were speaking, your peer suddenly turned his or her back on you and walked away saying, ‘I don’t want to hear any more about this.’ What would you do?” *[puzzle question]*

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Authority, Issues with, and Subordinate Competence

If you are hiring an employee who will become a part of your staff, that person will have to answer to you concerning his or her actions at work. Although it is important that the candidate be able to work comfortably and cooperatively within the immediate environment, it is essential that he or she be able to get on well with you. Some candidates have a history of authority-based friction; they hate being told what to do. Authority annoys them. Directives rankle them. Rules aggravate them. They may claim that they are just being independent and entrepreneurial; management, however, wanted an automaton. The following questions are designed to give you some insight regarding how the candidate typically handles authority relationships at work.

- “What management ‘style’ gets the best out of you? How much of a management role do you need to produce good results? How do you like to be supervised?” *[puzzle questions]*
- “Describe a situation in which you and your boss disagreed on an action you wanted to take. What happened?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about the worst manager you ever had. I’d be interested in learning what made the situation so uncomfortable and how you attempted to deal with it.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What have you done to get support for the things you want to do on the job?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about the best manager you ever had. I’d be interested in hearing about the qualities and techniques he or she used that you found to be so beneficial.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Let’s say your manager made a change in your job without first discussing that change with you. Suppose that change would have a detrimental affect on your ability to meet job expectations. What would you do?” *[puzzle question]*
- “I’d be interested to learn how you and your previous bosses typically exchanged information.” *[behavioral question]*
- “How would you go about establishing a relationship with a new boss?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What element about being managed bothers you the most? Why?” *[puzzle question]*
- “From your past experience, what have you found to be the most important factors in establishing and maintaining a good relationship with one’s immediate boss?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a situation when you believed your boss was about to make a very serious error in judgment. What did you do?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you found it virtually impossible to support some decision senior management had made. What did you do?” *[behavioral question]*
- “It’s been said that managing others is a skill but functioning as a subordinate is an art. What do you think are the major challenges in functioning as a subordinate?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What have been the most serious problems you’ve had with the people you’ve worked for? How did you attempt to resolve those issues?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about the last time you broke the rules.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What has been your most enjoyable job situation to date? What role did management play in making that experience so unique for you?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Organizations, like people, have their deficiencies. Tell me about the dysfunctional practices you’ve had to deal with on previous jobs. I’d like to hear about the strategies you used to manage around them.” *[behavioral question]*

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Beliefs, Values, and Philosophy

Because ultimately people base their decisions on their beliefs, values, and philosophy, the compatibility of these elements with those of the organization becomes a critical factor in the hiring process. An executive who believes that people are disposable and interchangeable will, in the face of downsizing, make different decisions from one who believes that every employee is unique and that those individual differences are the key to the organization's future success. A salesperson who believes that his job is to assist a customer in buying the best product for his or her needs will behave differently from one who believes that her job is to 'make my numbers and push product.' Here are some questions to help you explore the candidate's beliefs, values, and philosophy.

- "How would you describe what has been your basic business philosophy?" *[behavioral question]*
- "If you were to outline a basic set of values and beliefs upon which to build a sound management philosophy, what factors would you include?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What has been the most difficult staff decision you have ever had to make? What made that decision so difficult?" *[behavioral question]*
- "What evidence can you point to that illustrates your personal values and beliefs as they operate on the job?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Tell me about a time when you found that your basic values or beliefs were in conflict with those of the organization. I'd be interested to hear the basis of the conflict and how you attempted to resolve it." *[behavioral question]*
- "Suppose you were faced with a politically sensitive decision (say what to do about an AIDS-infected staff member whose productivity was beginning to slip drastically). On what basis would you attempt to sort out the issues involved so that an appropriate decision could be made?" *[puzzle question]*
- "Please describe your overall philosophy regarding the management of other people. I'd be interested to learn how your philosophy guided some of your decisions on previous jobs." *[behavioral question]*
- "Describe for me how some of your daily actions on your previous job were a reflection of your basic beliefs and values." *[behavioral question]*
- "If you could structure the ideal work environment, what kinds of staff behaviors would you encourage and reward? What behaviors would you attempt to discourage? Why?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What kinds of attitudes in others make you uncomfortable in being around them? Why?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What do you know about the core values and business philosophy of this organization? How do they relate to your own personal values and philosophy?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What specific work experience has done the most to shape your personal beliefs, values, and philosophy?" *[behavioral question]*
- "What kinds of operating principles do you value most (and least) in a work environment?" *[puzzle question]* "Please give me some examples from your previous jobs." *[behavioral question]*
- "What qualities do you most value in a staff member? What qualities do you most value in a boss? What do you suppose your staff most values in you?" *[puzzle questions]* "What evidence can you point to that proves that?" *[behavioral question]*

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Clerical Skills

Competent clerical support persons are among the most important assets an organization has; they are the key to managerial effectiveness. By assuming the bulk of the administrative trivia and bureaucratic paperwork, they free their bosses to concentrate on the more critical issues of the business. The key ingredient to a successful placement depends on the personality fit between the assistants and the executives for whom they work so that they can forge a highly cohesive partnership. These questions can be useful in determining the suitability of such candidates.

- “How would you go about establishing a relationship with a new boss?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you had to juggle multiple priorities for a number of bosses, all of whom thought their work was the most important and should be done first. How did you sort that out?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Please explain how you typically organize your day. I’d be interested to hear about the tools and strategies you like to use.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe a situation in which you had to complete an important project for a very senior executive. At some point on the project, you needed your boss’s input but he or she was unavailable. How did you determine what to do?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Please describe the most difficult boss you’ve ever worked for. What made him or her so terrible? What techniques did you use to make your relationship function effectively?” *[behavioral question]*
- “On every job there are people who are ‘difficult.’ What kind of people do you find are the most trying in terms of your patience.” *[puzzle question]* “What methods have to used to cope with such individuals?” *[behavioral question]*
- “In your opinion, what has been the most valuable contribution you have made to your bosses on previous jobs? Why?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Please describe the best boss you ever had. What made him or her so special?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What system do you typically use for setting your work priorities? Why?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What is your secondary strategy for setting your work priorities?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about the kinds of rewards or recognition that have made you feel truly appreciated for your contributions.” *[behavioral question]* “Suppose you were working for a boss who would never do any of those things. What would you do to get his or her attention?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Please tell me about the kind of activities you were involved with in previous jobs that were NOT a part of your regular work responsibilities. How did you happen to become involved with those particular tasks?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when a boss asked you to work overtime and your personal plans required that you leave work at the regular time. I’d be interested to learn how you were able to manage your boss’s expectations without sacrificing your plans.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about the most difficult work situation you have ever had to face. What made it so challenging? How did you go about handling it?” *[behavioral question]*
- “In what ways has your present employment situation contributed to your desire to seek a new job opportunity?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How does this job opportunity fit in to your overall career plans?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What forms or documents have you designed or developed for your area? What was the purpose of each?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Some bosses like to handle their own correspondence. Others want their administrative assistants, with a few guidelines, to take care of those matters for them. What has been your experience in this area? With which are you the most comfortable?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Please describe the most complex document you have ever had to produce.” *[behavioral question]*

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Collaborative Relationships

If you are looking for a candidate who will hold a leadership role in your organization, you will need someone with the ability to build and maintain collaborative working relationships. Trust is the essential ingredient in building such relationships. The new hire must be able to generate confidence in his or her brand of leadership by providing each staff member with a sense of stability and consistency. At the same time, this person must sustain that sense of mutual accountability and individual responsibility that you have established among the staff. These questions may help you find that type of person.

- “What strategies have you used to maintain a strong relationship between yourself and each one of your individual staff members?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What techniques have you used to encourage your people to give you the bad news when they screw things up?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when changes that are likely to be unpopular with your staff were imminent. What means did you use to inform your staff of those changes? How far in advance did you inform them? Why?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What have you done to encourage the full sharing of information among individual staff members?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How would you go about building and maintaining an atmosphere of trust in your department?” *[puzzle question]*
- “How often and under what circumstances should a supervisor involve the staff in his or her decision-making and problem-solving efforts?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What role have you played in managing conflicts that arise between staff members? Please share with me some specific examples.” *[behavioral question]*
- “How have you determined which conflicts require your intervention and which ones do not?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Under what circumstances have you accepted assistance from your staff members in matters that are distinctly your personal responsibility?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a situation in which one of your staff members was in conflict with a person from another area. What was your role in resolving the problem?” *[behavioral question]*
- “If you join this organization, what kind of culture would you will strive to create within your department? How will you go about doing that?” *[puzzle question]*
- “On previous jobs, what issues threatened to damage the cohesiveness of your staff? What strategies did you use to alleviate the threat?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How have you ensured that you remain in the information loop so that you can effectively monitor the productivity of your staff without over-managing the group?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What tangible evidence can you point to that illustrates your ability to build and maintain collaborative relationships between you and all the people with whom you work?” *[behavioral question]*
- “As a manager, what kinds of behaviors would you encourage and reward among your staff? What kinds of behaviors would you discourage and punish? Why?” *[behavioral question]*
- “For what purposes would you consider it necessary to get together with peer managers in other areas of the organization?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What responsibility, if any, do you believe you have toward your peer managers in other areas of the company? How should those responsibilities carried out?” *[puzzle question]*
- “On previous jobs, how did you go about establishing your leadership role with an inherited staff?” *[behavioral question]*

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Communication Skills

No matter what the job, communication is part of it. In fact, the greater the responsibilities, the more critical it is that the person in that job be a competent communicator. The interview process is a great opportunity to assess a candidate's communication skills. You have the chance here to evaluate the candidate's ability to express ideas persuasively; describe concepts clearly; organize thoughts sequentially, use appropriate vocabulary and diction; hold the listener's interest; and establish and maintain good eye contact. You want someone who listens well to others and is able to communicate clearly, concisely, and directly with people at all levels of the organization. The following questions are aimed at testing the candidate's communication skills.

- “Describe an occasion when you really had to listen to someone who was not communicating clearly. How were you able to respond effectively?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What do you think are the characteristics of an effective communicator?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Describe yourself as you are seen by other people. *[puzzle question]*
- “Describe a time when you were working closely with a peer who had a very annoying habit. How did you influence that person to moderate his or her behavior?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you were in the middle of a very complicated project and your boss assigned an untrained person to help you. How did you obtain worthwhile assistance from this person?” *[behavioral question]*
- “If you were assigned the task of making a presentation to the board of directors of this company, what steps would you take to prepare yourself for that speech?” *[puzzle question]*
- “I'd like to hear about the most challenging communication situation you have ever come up against. Tell me what made it challenging and how you handled it.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What kind of communication situations are most difficult for you? Why?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you came up with an idea that would solve a departmental problem. How did you go about ‘selling’ your idea to your boss?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What do you think are the keys to good communication?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Suppose two of your peers were locked in a conflict that impacted the entire group and you were asked to mediate and help the combatants resolve their problem. How would you go about doing that?” *[puzzle question]*
- “On previous jobs, when you were faced with the need for some creative problem solving, where did you typically start the solution finding process?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Given the choice of communication methods, which would you choose, e-mail, face-to-face, or telephone? Why?” *[puzzle question]*
- “It is important that you be as effective as possible in delivering a critical piece of information. What would you do differently in preparing yourself to make that communication by e-mail as opposed to face-to-face and/or telephone?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Let's assume that you are a consultant advising a company president on how he or she might compensate the company's sales force. Please give me both sides of the argument relating to full commission, salary only, or some combination of salary plus commission.” *[puzzle question]*
- “One of the most challenging communication situations for any manager is providing feedback to an employee whose performance has not met expectations. Please tell me about a time when you had to do that. I'd be interested in hearing exactly what you said to the employee and what the impact of your communication was.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What is it like to work with you?” *[puzzle question]*

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Confidence

Confidence is the one attribute that makes a candidate extremely appealing to an interviewer. These are people who demonstrate conviction in their ideas and judgments, confidence in their skills and abilities, and a strong “can-do” belief in themselves to handle any challenge that might come their way. They accept responsibility for the outcomes of their decisions and the results of their actions. In addition, they look at change, conflict, and failure as opportunities for growth. The following questions are designed to shed some light on the candidate’s sense of confidence.

- “Relate an incident in which you questioned a decision that you thought was wrong when the person who made the decision was more senior than you.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about one of the most challenging assignments you have undertaken during the last year. What made it so challenging? How did you meet those challenges?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What experience have you had with conflict resolution techniques that would enable you to do well in a supervisory role?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you and your boss didn’t agree on how a situation should be dealt with. How did you resolve your differences?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe a situation in which your work priorities were in conflict with those of your boss. How did you resolve the problem?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a decision you made and things did not turn out as well as you had anticipated they would. I’d be interested in how you explained things to your boss afterward.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What kinds of circumstances or events at work have influenced you the most?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What have you learned about yourself in the past three years?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How do you get new ideas?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What is the biggest risk you have ever taken at work? What made it risky? What did you do to minimize the risk? How did it turn out?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What factors most influence your willingness to take risks at work?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What do you think are the most important issues that will face this industry in the next ten years? How are you preparing yourself to deal with those changes?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What specific qualities make you suitable for this position?” *[puzzle question]*
- “During the past six months, how many times have you stepped outside the normal bounds of your knowledge, authority, and responsibility to take on an unfamiliar task? Why?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a work situation when you faced incredible odds in terms of succeeding, but you went ahead and tackled the situation anyway. Why did you take on this problem in the first place? What made you believe you could succeed at handling it?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe a situation at your last job when you knew you were right but the odds of winning management over to your point of view were almost nonexistent. What did you do?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe a time when you influenced a group of people to change from the way they were doing things to a method you suggested.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Suppose you wanted your boss to change the way he or she intended to handle something. You knew your idea would have a better outcome, but it would be very difficult to implement. How would you go about selling your idea to your boss?” *[puzzle question]*
- “How do you determine when to take a risk and when not to?” *[puzzle question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

Conflict Management and Resolution Skills

Two issues set the stage for work-related conflict: an interdependent relationship between the parties involved and a deep concern about what is going on. It is a foregone conclusion, therefore, that when people work together, under the pressure of deadlines, conflicting priorities, and division of scarce resources, human relations will become strained. Unless your candidate will be working alone, the issue of human relations becomes vital in evaluating his or her suitability. Typically, the human relations issue surfaces with the closed-ended question, "Do you get along well with other people?" which brings forth the response, "Yes." What you need to ascertain during the interview is whether the candidate manages conflict effectively. Here are some questions that may provide some insight on this issue.

- "Tell me about a situation when you and a peer from somewhere else in the organization were in conflict over some interdepartmental work situation. How was the problem resolved? What role did you play in its resolution?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Suppose you were a member of a seven-person work team and three of the members could not get along with one another. Suppose this situation was destroying the group's effectiveness. What, if anything, would you do? Why?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What experience have you had with conflict-resolution techniques that would enable you to do well in a management role?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Tell me about a time when you and your boss didn't agree on how a situation should be handled. How did you resolve your differences?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Describe a situation in which your work priorities were in conflict with those of your boss. How did you resolve the problem?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Tell me about a time when you needed critical information from another department in order to complete your work. The other department, however, did not think the gathering of your data was a priority. How did you work things out?" *[behavioral question]*
- "What circumstances or situations make your work difficult? Please give me an example of how, when faced with such a situation, you resolved it." *[behavioral question]*
- "Suppose you had an aggravating co-worker with whom you had to work. What steps would you take to begin making your relationship somewhat more tolerable?" *[puzzle question]*
- "Please describe a common type of conflict situation you experienced in your previous job. What resolution techniques did you use to deal with such situations?" *[behavioral question]*
- "What's the biggest problem you are wrestling with at work right now?" *[behavioral question]* "How do you plan to resolve it?" *[puzzle question]*
- "In your previous job, what types of pressures did you encounter? What were your favorite strategies for dealing with those issues?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Tell me about a time when you joined a team that was going through some internal conflict. What happened when you joined the team? How did you cope?" *[behavioral question]*
- "What strategies does a person have for dealing with conflict?" *[puzzle question]* "Which of those strategies did you use most often at your previous job?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Tell me about a situation with a staff member who was being vague and indirect with you about his or her activities. How did you get that person to finally tell you the truth?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Tell me about a time when you had to work with a group that had a history of jointly resisting company guidelines and management authority. What did you do?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Suppose you had to tell your staff about a corporate decision that you knew would impact very negatively on the group. How would you prepare them for the bad news?" *[puzzle question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

Continuous Learning

Today, with such fast technological changes, a person's skills can rapidly become obsolete. A good candidate for ANY job is one who makes an effort to keep his or her knowledge and skills current. Self-development is something a person does for him- or herself, not because the boss or the organization requires it. It is done because the individual is motivated by a desire to improve. During the interview, listen for situations in which learning was possible if the candidate accepted responsibility for errors he or she had made in judgment or actions. When candidates blame others or the organization for what went wrong, they show you they cannot learn from their experiences. Here are some questions that may shed some light on this area.

- "Share with me an experience of learning something new about yourself in the course of a project or assignment." *[behavioral question]*
- "What is your learning style?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What have you done recently to become more effective in your present position?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Tell me about something you learned from a past mistake." *[behavioral question]*
- "Describe a situation that turned out badly for you but from which you learned a great deal." *[behavioral question]*
- "Over the past twelve months, how much of your own time and/or money have you invested in your own personal development and for what specific purposes?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Tell me how you have purposefully attempted to strengthen your skills, knowledge, and capabilities on the job. What strategies did you use?" *[behavioral question]*
- "I'd be interested to learn what kinds of circumstances or events have influenced you to learn something totally new." *[behavioral question]*
- "In what ways have you shared your desire for additional growth or challenge with your previous bosses?" *[behavioral question]*
- "What do you think are the most important issues that will face this industry in the next ten years? How are you preparing yourself to deal with those changes?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What self-development goals have you set for yourself in the past three years? Why those particular goals?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Tell me about the process you used to establish your own personal development goals." *[behavioral question]*
- "What educational experiences have you had recently that will help you on this job?" *[behavioral question]*
- "What have you done to prepare yourself for a job of this type?" *[behavioral question]*
- "In addition to the strengths, skills, and resources you already have, where would you like some additional training, education, or coaching? Why those particular areas? What strategies will you use to obtain that additional training or education?" *[puzzle questions]*
- "Describe for me how you went about acquiring a new skill." *[behavioral question]*
- "What are the two most important qualities an organization should look for in a potential employee? Why?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What role have goals and goal setting played in your self-management strategy? Why? Please give me some examples." *[behavioral question]*
- "Let's say your boss gave you some feedback regarding skills or knowledge he or she felt you did not have but should acquire. Suppose you felt that the boss's suggestions were not relevant to your career plans or present job situation. What would you do?" *[puzzle question]*
- "Tell me about a project or task you worked on that did not turn out successfully. Walk me through the debriefing process that followed." *[behavioral question]*
- "What did you learn about this organization prior to coming to the interview. How exactly did you go about obtaining this information?" *[behavioral question]* "Why was that information of interest to you?" *[puzzle question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

- “What’s the one facet of your job that continually generates a sense of excitement and enthusiasm for you?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What have you done to anticipate business trends in the industry that has proved valuable to you in your work? Please give me some specific examples.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What reading do you do that is related to your work? Please summarize what you have learned over the past six months from your research.” *[behavioral question]*
- “In what ways has your present employment situation contributed to your desire to seek a new job opportunity?” *[behavioral question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

Creativity

Creative people are not the easiest to manage. They function as a catalyst, irreverent of consensual views. They are likely to approach work issues from unexpected angles because they question all the assumptions surrounding a problem. They are capable of detailed routine work for only short periods of time. They are undisciplined in their thinking, often challenging the rules and customary ways of doing things. In fact, they generally have very little respect for past custom. Although they often threaten group cohesion and cooperation, they do provide the dynamics to bring about periodic radical change. Although conventional wisdom says that everyone is capable of being creative, if your position requires a creative person in it, look for someone who (1) possesses knowledge, talent, and experience in the field; (2) demonstrates a tolerance for ambiguity and complexity; (3) demonstrates a knowledge of creativity tactics, problem-solving skills, and idea generation. You also want someone with high energy and an ability for sustained concentration. Here are some questions that will help in the assessment process.

- “Describe a problem you solved with an exceptionally creative solution.” *[behavioral question]*
- “How do you balance your reliance on intuition with the facts?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Describe a situation in which you concluded that the risks of pushing your unique solution far outweighed the rewards of its probable success, but you went ahead anyway.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you tackled a problem for which there was no set procedure, precedent, or historical background. How did you get started?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What has been your framework or logic base for tackling an issue that requires an innovative solution?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a creative approach you used to solve a difficult and longstanding problem.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What has been your most creative achievement at work?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Sometimes people really balk when it comes to adopting a new and particularly creative idea. Please tell me about a time when you had to confront such reluctance.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What types of projects have you been involved with where part of the requirement was innovation?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about the types of strategies you use when attempting to come up with a creative approach to something you are working on.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What do you think are the competencies a person needs to have in order to be creative?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Give me an example of a situation for which you had to facilitate progressive change. What obstacles did you encounter? How did you work around them?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Suppose you inherited a problem department—one suffering from low productivity and poor morale. What creative strategies would you use to turn things around?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What kind of stimulation do you need in a job in order to increase your capacity for creative thinking.” *[puzzle question]*
- “What is the most creative thing you have ever done at work?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a creative solution or approach you attempted to introduce, but you faced incredible resistance. What happened?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Suppose you came up with a very unusual and creative method for solving a longstanding problem. You knew your solution would work. The organization, however, felt your approach was too risky. What would you do?” *[puzzle question]*
- “In the past, how long has it taken you to generate a new idea or innovative approach to some problem? Please give me some examples.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about the last time you broke the rules.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about the tasks in your last job in which you were able to try out some of your own ideas and new or innovative approaches.” *[behavioral question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

- “Describe a problem for which your first solution—although creative—did not work. What kind of methods or strategies did you use to come up with additional approaches? How long did you pursue a solution before you were successful?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What do you take into account when you first approach a task where one of the requirements is to find an innovative approach or solution?” *[puzzle question]*
- “If you were hiring a person whose job assignment was primarily to be creative, what qualities would you look for?” *[puzzle question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

Creativity, Encourages in Others, and Innovation

Innovation depends on hiring people with creative capabilities. It also depends on management personnel who know how to develop and maintain a working environment that encourages and nurtures change and risk taking. People with imagination and ingenuity need leadership that understands the needs of the inventive mind and how to inspire it. Such a candidate understands the importance of challenging assignments, open information flow, regular feedback, and clear goals and expectations. Such a candidate is not afraid to support his or her creative staff by providing them with a good deal of autonomy, competent technical support, protection from compliance with management directives, and a share in any decision making. The following questions target this capability in candidates.

- “On previous jobs, what techniques have you used to encourage risk taking among your staff?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Please tell me about a situation in which creativity of your staff played a pivotal role in your management strategy.” *[behavioral question]*
- “I’d be interested to learn how you have rewarded risk takers whose results were dubious versus those risk takers whose results were successful.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What techniques and strategies have you used to stimulate the creative energies of your staff?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How would you determine whether a person is creative?” *[puzzle question]*
- “How would you encourage an employee to be more imaginative?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What kinds of things tend to kill a person’s creative energy?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you attempted to encourage creative thinking and action among your people. What specifically did you do?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe a time when you knew that one of your people was suffering burnout. How did you identify the problem? What did you do to help him or her?” *[behavioral question]*
- “In previous jobs, how did you typically encourage your staff to initiate significant changes to what they were doing? I’d be interested in hearing some specific examples.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Please describe the techniques or strategies you have found most helpful in encouraging the creativity of your staff.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about the changes made in your area in the past three months. I’d be interested to learn who suggested those changes and also what created the focus on those particular areas.” *[behavioral question]*
- “How would you structure a working environment for a staff whose central mission was to come up with innovative products that would be added to the company’s product line?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Please describe the creative management strategies you have implemented with your people. For what specific purposes were these strategies used?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What techniques have you used to encourage your people to give you the ‘bad news’ when they screw things up?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How often and under what circumstances do you involve your staff in your decision-making and problem-solving efforts?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What do you think are the basic differences between managing people whose mission is to be creative versus managing professionals whose work is more conventional?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What strategies have you used to maintain a strong relationship between yourself and each one of your individual staff members?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How would you go about building and maintaining an atmosphere of trust in your department?” *[puzzle question]*
- “How often and under what circumstances should a supervisor involve his or her staff in decision-making and problem-solving efforts?” *[puzzle question]* “Please give me an example when you involved your staff in such a situation.” *[behavioral question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

- “Under what circumstances have you accepted assistance from your staff members in matters that are distinctly your personal responsibility?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How would you go about establishing your leadership role with an inherited staff that had a history of being minimally managed?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What is unique or distinctive about your management style? Why do you operate in this manner?” *[puzzle question]*
- “If I asked your previous staff to describe your management style, what do you think they might say?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What steps would you take to make sure that a staff of creative people produced what was expected within the designated time frame?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What type of employee do you find is the most difficult for you to manage? Why?” *[puzzle question]* “What strategies have you used to manage such individuals?” *[behavioral question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

Customer Service Orientation

A service provider needs a particular attitude and psyche that is not tied to the importance of being right in every situation. Candidates interested in providing superior customer service to both internal and external clients must be able to identify and understand the needs of others. They strive to surpass the expectations of their clients. They realize that, without customers, there is no business; and without an adequate level of service, the customer will not return. They can differentiate the fine line between extraordinary customer service, resulting in a delighted client, and maintaining a healthy business (not giving the store away). Here are some questions that will explore the candidate's understanding and ability to serve others.

- "Please describe a situation in which you were able to turn a negative customer around. What was the issue? How did you accomplish the turnaround?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Tell me about a time when you made a personal sacrifice in order to help another person attain a work-related objective." *[behavioral question]*
- "What do you think is the difference between quality and customer service?" *[puzzle question]*
- "Most customer-service efforts focus on handling complaints. What problems do you see with such a strategy?" *[puzzle question]*
- "Tell me about a time when you were dealing with a customer who wanted his or her problem resolved in a way that was detrimental to the company. What did you do?" *[behavioral question]*
- "What role should company policies and procedures play in customer service?" *[puzzle question]*
- "In your opinion, what are the three most significant elements a customer expects from a customer-service representative?" *[puzzle question]*
- "Please describe four qualities a good customer-service representative should demonstrate. Why do you think those qualities are important?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What has been your greatest source of job satisfaction?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Describe a situation in which the customer's perception of what occurred was clearly wrong. How did you go about resolving the problem?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Statistics tell us that for every customer who complains, eighteen others will go away dissatisfied saying nothing. How can a customer-service representative encourage the silent customers to speak up?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What is an acceptable level of customer dissatisfaction?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What strategies have you used for dealing with a very angry and verbally abusive customer?" *[behavioral question]*
- "After an interaction with an abusive customer, what do you do in order to prevent that interaction from influencing succeeding interactions?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Suppose you had extended yourself far beyond what normally would be expected in order to satisfy the needs of an internal customer. Afterward, however, you received no acknowledgment or appreciation for your extraordinary efforts. What, if anything, would you do? How would you feel?" *[puzzle question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

Delegation Effectiveness

A candidate for a management or supervisory position should understand the importance delegation plays in effective leadership. Good managers delegate because it is impossible for them to accomplish everything themselves. In addition, delegation is also the only way an employee grows into greater responsibility. When a manager delegates well, not only does the staff become more capable, but more is accomplished. Without a knowledge of and comfort in using delegation strategies, a manager will become enmeshed in doing work his or her staff should be doing, and the staff will feel unchallenged because there is no opportunity for them to grow in capability and competence. The following questions are designed to help you assess the candidate's understanding of the delegation process and its importance in managing.

- “What do you believe are the keys to successful delegation?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Walk me through the process you use to delegate assignments and projects.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Many employees complain that their bosses use an all-or-nothing approach to delegation (‘Here’s the job; go run with it.’) and that they feel dumped on. Others complain that they are not given enough of a free hand so that they can handle the assignment properly. What strategies have you used to avoid both types of complaints?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Suppose you delegate some very critical assignment and the employee involved really messes up the project. What would you do?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Describe a situation when you bypassed one of your staff members by making decisions that were really part of his or her job. What were the specific circumstances?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a situation when you had to overrule or reverse decisions made by one of your staff members.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What steps have you taken to prepare a member of your staff to take your place in the event you are either incapacitated or leave the area to take another position?” *[behavioral question]*
- “In a delegation situation, what would you do to prevent the employee from coming back to you complaining that he or she had insufficient authority, finances, or resources with which to do the job?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you delegated a task and then discovered that the employee involved had gone beyond the limits of his or her authority. What did you do?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What is the frequency of promotions among your people as compared with that of other managers in the organization?” *[puzzle question]*
- “On your previous job, what would you say was the percentage of time you spent on planning and the supervision of your staff versus working on actual tasks?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Suppose you returned from an extended absence and discovered that—even though you had delegated a number of projects and assignments—many of those items had been abandoned in the middle. According to your staff, each of the abandoned items required some additional input or action from you. What would you do in order to keep that situation from happening again?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Describe for me the strategies you have used for encouraging your staff members to seize the initiative and expand their authority by taking on projects without waiting for you to initiate the assignment.” *[behavioral question]*
- “In your previous job, how often did it happen that you delegated something only to have it come back without the results you specified? What did you do when that happened?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What specific techniques have you used to encourage each employee to develop his or her capabilities?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you had a staff member who totally resisted taking on any additional delegated assignments. What did you do to change the person’s attitude?” *[behavioral question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

- “Often it is easier and less time-consuming to do something yourself rather than spend time telling or training someone else to do it. What has been your method for getting around this problem?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What techniques have you used to monitor the progress (or lack thereof) of tasks you have delegated?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you influenced one of your people to assume more responsibility or to take on a task that you knew would be difficult for him or her.” *[behavioral question]*
- “I’d be interested to learn how you have typically determined which tasks are delegated to whom.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What techniques have you used to encourage risk taking among your staff?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How have you rewarded risk takers whose results were dubious versus those risk takers whose results were successful?” *[behavioral question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

Develops Others

If the organization is to survive and grow, current leadership positions must be staffed with people willing and able to develop their staff members so that the organization has a trained cadre of people who are capable of eventually moving into leadership roles. This means hiring people into current leadership positions who understand how to create the possibility for the maximum contribution possible from each staff member. It requires an ability to inspire and coach one's people to fulfill and then exceed their individual potential. It also means encouraging and rewarding responsible risk taking. For a growing organization, this may well be the most critical competency to look for. Here are questions that target this area of concern.

- “Describe a time when you encouraged and rewarded employees for taking initiative. How did you encourage them? How did you reward them?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What has been one of the most difficult pieces of performance-related feedback you have had to give to an employee?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What strategies have you used to encourage your people to develop their capabilities?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How would you determine which tasks are delegated to whom?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What techniques have you used to monitor the progress (or lack thereof) of tasks you have delegated?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How would you assess the developmental needs of an employee?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Describe a situation in which an employee was having a serious performance problem. What kind of assistance did you provide to him or her?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How have you ensured objectivity when evaluating the performance of one of your staff whom you either did not like or who had not performed as specified?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How would you influence a staff member to assume more responsibility or to take on a task that you knew would be difficult for him or her to do?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you had to motivate an employee who was afraid to make decisions. What did you do?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How often and under what circumstances should a manager or supervisor engage in a formal coaching and feedback session with an individual employee?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What do you think is your most important contribution as a manager or supervisor?” *[puzzle question]*
- “How would you determine that one of your people was ready to assume a leadership role?” *[puzzle question]*
- “How have you structured the environment so that each individual who reports to you is able to reach his or her full potential?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How do you typically confront a staff member when his or her results are unacceptable or disappointing? Do you use different strategies based on your understanding of the person's capabilities? Please give me some specific examples.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What has happened to the subordinates who are no longer working for you?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How often and under what circumstances have you terminated a staff member? What efforts did you make to save the employee?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Out of all the people who have ever worked for you, which ones do you admire the most? Why?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Please give me five adjectives that describe the type of people whom you have hired to work for you. Why have you placed so much value on those particular qualities?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What strategies have you used to ensure that one of your staff members is prepared to step into your responsibilities should you decide to leave?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How would you quantify your results as a manager who develops others?” *[puzzle question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

- “What have you done recently to help your individual staff members to become more effective in their present positions?” [*behavioral question*]

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

Emotional Maturity, Stress (Ability to Handle), and Professionalism

Emotional maturity is about self-control and not being victimized by one's impulses. Emotional maturity also involves the ability to handle stressful situations in a professional manner (composure under fire). Stress is a common occurrence at work. You want a candidate who has enough self-restraint so that he or she behaves professionally and in a rational manner no matter how upset he or she may be. Being able to repress those impulsive moments of rage and anger should be a requirement for anyone in a leadership role. For those in a customer service position, the skill of maintaining an emotional balance with appropriate responses and civility to others who are raging may mean the difference between business lost or gained. The following questions will assist you in determining the candidate's emotional maturity and professionalism under fire.

- "Describe a time when your skills in diplomacy and patience were put to the test." *[behavioral question]*
- "Please give me a few examples of situations that create high levels of stress for you on the job. What strategies have you used to deal with such occurrences?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Tell me about a time when a peer criticized you unjustly in front of others, including your boss. What did you do?" *[behavioral question]*
- "What strategies have you used to avoid getting burned out or feeling overloaded?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Tell me about a situation when you inherited an employee who, although talented and very well-trained, performed his or her job inadequately." *[behavioral question]*
- "How would you evaluate your tolerance for significant and unrealistic pressure from senior management?" *[puzzle question]* "Please give me some examples when this occurred and how you managed the problems thus created." *[behavioral question]*
- "Tell me about a time when one of your staff did something so outrageous and appalling that you wanted to kill him or her on the spot." *[behavioral question]*
- "Tell me about a situation when, in an effort to maintain amicable relations, you delayed speaking up to a peer who was doing things that created difficulties for your department. What happened when you finally confronted the person?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Tell me about a time when you delayed confronting an employee about his or her poor performance long past the time when the issues should have been dealt with. What happened when you finally confronted the employee? Why did you delay the inevitable?" *[behavioral question]*
- "When was the last time you got into an argument at work? What happened? What was the issue involved? How were things resolved?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Suppose a customer or client made a totally unrealistic demand and then was personally abusive when you refused to act on his or her demand. How would you respond?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What if you were hired into a senior management team that has a long history together and whose members blatantly refused to accept you into the group. Meetings were called for which you didn't receive notice; decisions that should have included your input were made without your knowledge; your requests for information were ignored; and so on. What would you do?" *[puzzle question]*
- "How have you prepared yourself psychologically to terminate a staff member whom you hired?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Suppose you and your boss were discussing a pretty volatile issue. Suddenly, while you were speaking, the boss stood up saying, 'I don't want to discuss this any further,' turned his or her back on you, and walked out of the room. What would you do?" *[puzzle question]*
- "Please give me an example of a time when your emotional self-control was really put to the test." *[behavioral question]*

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- “What kinds of things at work get you enraged. What do you do about those feelings? Please give me a few examples.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when your sense of professionalism was challenged.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Why is emotional maturity a critical factor in someone who takes a leadership role?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Let’s say you were mentoring a new supervisor who was known to show his or her temper every once in a while. How would you advise this person to get his or her emotions under control?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about a situation in which it was difficult to remain calm and objective.” *[behavioral question]*
- “In what areas do you typically have the least amount of patience at work when it comes to staff problems? What you do when such situations occur?” *[behavioral question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

Goal Setting

The competent management or supervisory candidate understands that goal setting is a potent leadership strategy. Goal setting provides the manager with a formidable vehicle for controlling the direction of the activities of those who report to him or her. In addition, goal setting moves an employee to higher levels of competence. It is the key ingredient for empowering a person to direct his or her own career. The clearer the notion the employee has about what he or she needs to accomplish (in a job or career), the greater the chance that it will happen. Having a clear end result in mind is not enough, however. The employee must be able to gauge his or her progress toward that end result. This is accomplished by including measurement markers (milestones) along the way. This is what will sustain the employee's motivation. It is the manager who must set the process in motion. Here are some questions that focus on a candidate's understanding of this important management tool.

- “What role, if any, have goals and goal setting played in your management strategy? Why? Please give me some examples.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What are the elements of an effective goal?” *[puzzle question]*
- “How should a manager influence his or her staff to set goals for themselves?” *[puzzle question]*
- “How would you go about creating clarity of purpose and focus for each individual employee?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about the process you have used to establish your department's goals?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Please describe the role you have played in the development of your staff members' individual goals.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What steps have you taken to ensure that each employee knows how to write effective goals (challenging, achievable, measurable, realistic, manageable, and compatible)?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How have you motivated your staff to achieve their goals?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How have you ensured that all goals—whether those set by the individuals who work for you or those set by you that relate to the department's activities—are realistic?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe for me the process you have used for reviewing an employee's progress toward the achievement of individual goals. I'd be interested in learning how often you reviewed progress and about any special techniques you initiated.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe a situation in which you had an employee who set easily achievable goals. How did you influence the person to set more challenging goals?” *[behavioral question]*
- “In what way have you ensured that the company's vision, mission, and purpose are reflected in the goals set by you for the department?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How have you verified that the company's vision, mission, and purpose are also supported by the personal goals set by your staff?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What purpose does goal setting serve? How often should it be done? How often should the goals, once set, be reviewed?” *[puzzle question]*
- “How have you created a sense of accountability and responsibility among your staff? I'd be interested in hearing about the specific techniques and strategies you use.” *[behavioral question]*
- “How have you ensured that the individuals who work for you experience a sense of achievement regarding their work?” *[behavioral question]*
- “In all your previous employment experiences, what elements did you find contributed the most to your own motivation? How have you attempted to include those elements in the work environments you manage?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Suppose you took over a department of fifteen people who had a history of marginal performance, low motivation, but competent skills. How would you get the group moving in a better direction?” *[puzzle question]*
- “If I were to ask your staff to describe your operating style, what do you suppose they might tell me?” *[puzzle question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

Individual Contributor (Works Independently/Works Alone)

There is a category of jobs that requires specific knowledge, skills, technical education, and self-supervision. Such jobs do not involve supervision of other people. For this type of job, you want an employee who is more comfortable working alone rather than as part of a team. You need someone who functions independently but who also knows when to seek assistance from others. Such candidates are distinguished by their intensity and drive. They like an environment that values challenging work and rewards achievement. Here are some questions for discovering this type of candidate.

- “Tell me about a time when you had an idea that would solve a serious departmental or organizational problem, but you knew your boss was not interested in putting any new ideas to work. How did you handle that situation?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How do you know when you’ve done a good job?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What have you found to be the most difficult challenge in dealing with people? What techniques have you used to help yourself in situations in which these challenges threatened to get in the way of what you had to do?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe a situation in which you were participating in a team project. What problems did you encounter? How were they resolved?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What has been your most creative achievement at work?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What kinds of things make your work difficult?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe for me the type of environment that best nurtures you.” *[puzzle question]*
- “Assuming compensation were not an issue, describe what you would like as the next logical progressive move in your overall career strategy.” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about a situation in which you were dependent on others for information, and what they gave you was unacceptable. What did you do?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Give me an example that illustrates your capacity for taking the initiative.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What strategies have you used to monitor your own performance?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How do you like to be managed?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What does growth mean to you?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Please give me an example from your previous work history when management got in the way of you producing your best results. What, if anything, did you attempt to do to prevent that from happening again?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How much structure, guidance, direction, and feedback do you need to excel?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Describe a situation in which you had to take part in a committee or task force at work.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What aspects of your work have provided you with the most personal satisfaction and enthusiasm? Please give me some examples.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about your experience working with others in a team setting. What did you find most rewarding? What did you find most frustrating?” *[behavioral question]*
- “In previous jobs, what kinds of things have created stress, tension, and pressure that you would like to avoid in future jobs?” *[puzzle question]* Give me some examples of how you coped with those situations.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What kind of obstacles or roadblocks have you encountered on previous jobs? What did you do about them?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you were in the middle of one project and the organization required your expertise on another assignment. What happened to the first project?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe a situation for which there was a good deal to learn before you were up to speed and you were facing a tight time frame. What strategies did you use to learn and then accomplish the task within the assigned time frame?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Suppose you were working on something where you had a good deal of knowledge about the issues involved but were stuck on some portion of the problem. How would you make the judgment as to when someone else’s input might be necessary?” *[puzzle question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

- “What do you do when something you are working on isn’t working out?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Please describe the physical work setting in which you have been the most productive. Why?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What kind of management style or supervisory techniques do you find are the most motivational for you? Why?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about the last time you broke the rules.” *[behavioral question]*
- “How have you kept the boss and the staff aware of your activities?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What would you do if the organization you were working with put a high value on social interaction among its staff members and kept trying to pull you into their activities when you were engaged in trying to get something accomplished?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What have been the most serious problems you have had with the people you worked with?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What special characteristics would you be bringing to the job?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What has been your experience working with a team as a peer member of the group?” *[behavioral question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

Influences Others

It's easy to persuade others when you are in charge; the difficult task is to influence others when you are not in control. Such an ability requires a talent for building relationships with people by appealing to common goals and values. It requires a knowledge of the currencies of influence that are typically valued in organizations, such as information, contacts, visibility, support, and so on. Candidates who possess the ability to influence others are able to induce co-workers, bosses, and clients to support their ideas and objectives. Here are some questions that bring out candidates' abilities to influence others.

- “Describe a time when you succeeded in getting someone to go along with something they were strongly opposed to doing.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about an occasion when you captured the involvement, participation, and support of others to work on and achieve a particular goal. I'd be interested to learn what strategies you used to accomplish this.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Let's say you discovered that a co-worker was doing something you considered to be unethical. What would you do to influence him or her to change his or her actions?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Suppose management were going to make a procedural change that would have a detrimental effect on your job. What steps would you take to influence management that the change should NOT be made?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you knew management was going to make a procedural change that would have a detrimental effect on your job. What steps did you take to influence management that the change should NOT be made? Why do you think your efforts were successful (or not successful)?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you worked for a ‘crisis manager’ who assigned work at the very last possible minute. What attempts did you make to influence a change in that manager's modus operandi?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Suppose your boss told you he or she was planning to give you a 5 percent raise in appreciation of your superior effort and spectacular results during the past twelve months. You, however, believed, with good reason, that your raise should be in the neighborhood of 10 to 12 percent. How would you persuade your boss to increase that planned percentage?” *[puzzle question]*
- “I'd like to hear how you influenced a staff member to assume more responsibility or to take on a task that you knew would be difficult for him or her to do. How satisfied were you with the results of your staff person's efforts?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe a situation in which you came up with an idea that would solve a departmental problem. How did you go about selling your idea to your boss and/or higher management?” *[behavioral question]*
- “From your experience, what strategies and techniques are the most potent and useful in successfully influencing others?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Describe a time when you had to influence someone higher up in the organization who had a reputation for being hard-headed. What was your strategy?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What evidence can you point to from your previous jobs that substantiates your effectiveness at influencing others?” *[behavioral question]*
- “I'd like to hear about a time when one team member did not carry his or her own weight. What efforts did you make to influence that situation?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you had to introduce an unpopular change to your staff. What steps did you take so that negative reactions might be minimized?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe a situation in which you were supervising a mediocre performer. What strategies did you use to motivate that person to increase his or her effectiveness?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when others were strongly opposed to something you wanted to do. What did you do?” *[behavioral question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

- “Suppose you attempted to sell a plan for a departmental reorganization to higher management. Your proposal, however, failed to capture people’s interest. What would be your next step?”
[puzzle question]
- “Assume I have just told you that I have interviewed three excellent candidates for this position and you are one of them. Convince me why you are the best of the three and are the person I should hire.” *[puzzle question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

Initiative Taking and Enterprising

An important attribute to look for in candidates is that of initiative taking. This quality is prized because such a person is willing to go beyond the boundaries of his or her specific job responsibilities and is generally able to work with minimal supervision. There is another, more important reason for valuing such candidates. These are individuals with an entrepreneurial spirit who are always searching for better ways of doing things. In their search for continuous improvement, they create and pursue innovative, imaginative projects with energy and enthusiasm. Such people contribute to an organization's long-term success, helping to keep the organization ahead of the curve. They help foster a challenging (and often chaotic) workplace because they bring fresh approaches to solving problems. The following questions aim at assessing this attribute.

- "Tell me about a time when you went above and beyond the call of duty. What motivated you to make that extra effort?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Relate an incident when you secured resources that were difficult to obtain but which were necessary in order for you to achieve a goal." *[behavioral question]*
- "What specific activities were you involved with in your last job that drew on your creative skills?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Describe a time when you responded to rejection by trying an alternative approach." *[behavioral question]*
- "On previous jobs, what organizational problems did you try to solve that were not specifically related to your job responsibilities?" *[behavioral question]*
- "What have you done recently to become more effective at your present position?" *[behavioral question]*
- "What typically gives you the most satisfaction on a job?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Tell me about a situation for which you used your initiative to solve a difficult problem and management's reaction was negative. How did you handle that?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Tell me about some of the changes that occurred on your last job because of something you did." *[behavioral question]*
- "What in your opinion qualifies as a risky situation at work? Why?" *[puzzle question]*
- "When was the last time you broke the rules?" *[behavioral question]*
- "What changes did you make in your area [or job] in the past three months. Why did you focus on those particular areas? How did you make those changes work?" *[behavioral question]*
- "If you took this job, how would you determine whether changes needed to be made? How would you go about introducing your ideas for change?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What kinds of experiences have contributed most to your development?" *[behavioral question]*
- "How would you ensure that such opportunities are available to you here?" *[puzzle question]*
- "How do you get support for the things you want to do that are outside of your normal job responsibilities?" *[behavioral question]*
- "On previous jobs, what role did you play in the assigning of work projects to you and your staff?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Describe for me what have been the two or three top accomplishments you have had in your most recent job." *[behavioral question]*
- "What evidence can you point to that substantiates a level of initiative taking on your most recent job?" *[behavioral question]*
- "How have you ensured that each job prepares you to assume greater challengers for the next job?" *[behavioral question]*
- "What kind of boss gets the best out of you?" *[puzzle question]*
- "Tell me about a time when you took action without getting prior approval for what you had decided to do. What happened?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Describe a situation when using your initiative got you into trouble." *[behavioral question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

- “Tell me about the last time you pushed for more responsibility and found yourself in over your head. How did you rescue the situation?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Suppose you had a great idea that would solve a complex departmental problem but you knew that your solution would create a good deal of chaos during implementation. How would you get the change process started?” *[puzzle question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

Integrity Driven

Integrity is not something you can teach an adult. It becomes an integral part of an individual's makeup at a very early age. In adults, it permeates their every decision and action and goes well beyond honesty. People with integrity act from a strong moral base. When the work involves handling other people's money, organizations are particularly careful to select candidates who conduct themselves with honesty and integrity in both their business and personal activities. An employee who conducts him- or herself with integrity does not play with the rules, doing things that *might* be considered unethical. You too should look for candidates who can be relied on to act in the best interests of customers, co-workers, and the organization. Here are some questions that can help identify such individuals.

- “Describe a situation in which you had to challenge someone who was not acting in the best interests of the organization and its guiding principles.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you resolved to pursue a course of action you believed in, despite opposition from others.” *[behavioral question]*
- “In a normal, everyday working situation, what actions or behaviors show others that a person has integrity?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Suppose you knew that others in your area (or your employees) were pilfering minor office supplies. Would you do anything about it, and if so, what would you do?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you stuck to your principles despite opposition from your boss. I'd be interested to learn why you felt so strongly about the issue.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when your integrity was challenged by a customer or client. What did you do?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Suppose the organization had a rule that prohibited gambling on the premises. You are a new supervisor with an inherited staff of great employees who organize and bet on a ‘sports pool’ every week. This practice has been going on for years. What would you do?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Describe a situation in which you were asked to tell a customer a little white lie (perhaps that an order had been shipped when it was still sitting on the warehouse floor). What did you do?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Suppose a co-worker told you something critical and swore you to secrecy. You knew it was important that your boss have this information. What would you do?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you made a commitment to deliver a time-critical project. Something untoward occurred (your hard drive crashed) that made it improbable that you would meet your commitment. What did you do?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe a situation in which you made a reasonable request for time off (perhaps for a family emergency) but your boss refused your request. What did you do?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Please give me a typical example of unethical behavior on the part of an employee. Why do you believe that behavior is unethical? If you were the employee's manager, what would you do about it?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Relate a situation from your previous work experience where you were asked to do something you believed would damage your integrity. How did you handle that situation?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Some salespeople will make exaggerated claims regarding their products' capability. Bosses will sometimes promise raises when they know additional funds are not available. Secretaries will repeatedly tell an unwanted caller that the boss is unavailable when he or she is there. Conventional wisdom tells us that such white lies are a business necessity. What has been your experience with such white lies in your previous jobs?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What strategies and techniques have you used in order to keep your integrity clean with regard to your staff?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Why do you think integrity is important in a manager?” *[puzzle question]*
- “In a typical business environment, what situations can you think of where total honesty would be inappropriate?” *[puzzle question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

- “How have you encouraged and maintained an atmosphere of trust between yourself and your subordinates?” *[behavioral question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

Interpersonal Skills

The quality of a candidate's interpersonal skills plays an important role in determining his or her eventual job success. The most significant reason employees are terminated is their inability to get along with their co-workers. When asked, candidates will assert that they have good people skills. It is important to look at two areas: (1) basic attitude toward other people and (2) ability to establish and maintain productive relationships with others whose deficiencies and irritating behavior they acknowledge. Here are several questions that may help in this assessment.

- “How have you handled the frustration of working closely with an annoying person?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you had to influence someone higher up in the organization who had a reputation for being hard-headed.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe a situation in which you had to criticize the work of a peer.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What type of person do you most like to work with? Why?” *[puzzle question]*
- “In previous jobs, what type of person have you found is most difficult to work with? What did you do in order to work productively with such a person?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What are some of the things previous supervisors did that you particularly disliked? What efforts did you make to confront them regarding their actions?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Consider all the bosses you’ve ever had. What were their most common weaknesses? What were their most common strengths?” *[puzzle question]*
- “How do you feel you’ve been treated by your co-workers over the years?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me some of the things about which you and your manager disagreed. What did you do about those disagreements?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Working closely with others on a team can be difficult. Describe for me the major challenges you’ve experienced as a team member.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about the most difficult interpersonal situation you have ever faced. What made it difficult for you? How did you handle it?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Suppose your manager asked you to tell one of your peers that he or she had better ‘shape up or ship out.’ How would you handle that situation?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about a situation when your boss was upset about a decision you had made. How did you handle your boss’s anger?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe a situation when you had an employee who was not capable of carrying his or her own weight in the department. What did you say to that person? What was the outcome of your discussion?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when a management peer made an unjustified complaint about something you supposedly did. How did you correct his or her perception of the situation?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Think of a time when you had to give bad news to a very sensitive and emotional employee. What techniques did you use in an attempt to keep the conversation on an even keel?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Suppose you were in a staff meeting and one of your peers—in front of all the others and your boss—said something very negative about you personally. What would you do?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Describe a frustrating situation you had with another department. How did you handle it?” *[behavioral question]*
- “On previous jobs, what factors have contributed most to your ability to handle frustrating situations and unreasonable people Please give me some examples.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What examples can you give me that best illustrate your ability to relate well with others?” *[behavioral question]*
- “In which of your past positions did you feel most isolated? Why? What did you attempt to do about that situation?” *[behavioral question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

- “In which of your past positions did you feel most comfortable? Why?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What have you done to create and then maintain effective relationships with people outside your immediate area? Why have you made the effort to do that?” *[behavioral question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

Leadership Skills

Experience at managing others does not automatically qualify a candidate as a good leader. Leadership style is the consistent pattern of behavior a person exhibits in attempting to influence the activities of others in achieving organizational goals. It includes the effective use of power. The true sign of leadership and power is accomplishment, not fear and domination. A supervisor or manager who does not understand how his or her behavior can impact the staff can cause dissatisfaction, a low level of productivity, and the loss of talented personnel. An effective leader puts people in charge of their own lives by giving them some autonomy so they can influence the factors that affect their jobs. This includes encouraging people to solve their own problems and providing the staff with a supportive structure that includes: (1) a clear sense of direction (goals), (2) an ongoing developmental process to increase skills and knowledge, (3) a competent appraisal/feedback communication system so people can tell how they are doing, (4) some control (decision making) over their job responsibilities, (5) encouraging cooperative (not competitive) relationships, (6) stimulating goal-oriented behavior, and (7) cultivating conflict resolution through mutual confrontation. It is the person in the leadership role who must keep individual employees focused on constant, continual improvement and thus encourage each person to set goals for his or her own growth. The following questions help to bring out those qualities in candidates.

- “What have you done to maintain a strong relationship between yourself and each individual staff member?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What role do you typically play in managing conflicts that arise between staff members?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What techniques have you used to encourage your people to give you the ‘bad news’ when they screw things up?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Please tell me what strategies you have used in order to build and maintain an atmosphere of trust in your department?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you influenced one of your people to assume more responsibility or to take on a task that you knew would be difficult for him or her.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What do you believe are the keys to successful delegation?” *[puzzle question]*
- “I’d be interested to learn how you have determined which tasks are delegated to whom.” *[behavioral question]*
- “How have you determined the developmental needs of each employee who reports to you?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How have you ensured objectivity when evaluating the performance of one of your staff?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you knew that one of your employees was having a performance problem. What kind of assistance did you provide?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What techniques have you used to encourage employees to develop their own capabilities?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How would you motivate an employee who is afraid to make decisions?” *[puzzle question]*
- “How often and under what circumstances do you involve your staff in your decision-making and problem-solving efforts?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What role has goal setting played in your leadership strategy?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What role do you play in the goal-setting activities of your employees?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How have you created clarity of purpose and focus for each individual employee?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Suppose you had an employee who set easily achieved goals. How would you encourage the person to set more challenging goals?” *[puzzle question]*
- “In your opinion, under what circumstances should a supervisor be able to ask a staff member to do something without giving an explanation? Why?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Describe a situation in which you believed a violation of the chain of command was necessary and would be condoned.” *[behavioral question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

- “How would you characterize your management style?” *[puzzle question]* “Please give me some specific examples that illustrate your style.” *[behavioral question]*
- “In the past, how have you recognized your staff for their contributions?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What kinds of things demotivate employees?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What do you think is a reasonable number of absences per month? What do you think should be done about a person who violates that limit repeatedly?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you were supervising a mediocre performer. What strategies did you use to motivate that person to increase his or her effectiveness?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What has been the toughest employee decision you have had to make as a manager?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe a specific situation when you terminated an employee. I’d be interested to learn what the issues were and the actions you took in attempting to save the employee.” *[behavioral question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

Management Competence

Managing others requires strong human relations skills, competent organizational skills, and a good deal of old-fashioned common sense. Many people find their way into leadership roles without any of those things and consequently cause much strife, confusion, and the loss of talented staff. If you are looking for a candidate who will hold a leadership role (supervisor, team leader, lead person), understand that experience as a supervisor does not automatically qualify a candidate as a good leader. The following questions may help your assessment process.

- “Describe the system you use for controlling department operations and overall performance.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What procedures have you used to forecast manpower needs in your area?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe the process you use for employee selection.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe the procedure you use for monitoring performance.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe the methods you use for employee development.” *[behavioral question]*
- “How do you quantify your effectiveness as a manager?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Please describe for me what you have found to be the most effective tools for motivating people.” *[behavioral question]*
- “How have you gone about evaluating individual employee performance? I’d be interested to learn about any processes you used for ensuring objectivity.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you had to introduce an unpopular change to your staff. What steps did you take so that negative reactions might be minimized?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What has happened to those staff members who left your supervision?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Describe the circumstances under which you have supervised most effectively.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe for me how you typically prepare for, organize, and run your departmental meetings.” *[behavioral question]*
- “How have you determined and then communicated developmental needs to individual staff members?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What have you done in previous positions to reduce your department’s operational costs?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How have you determined the training needs of your department?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What have you done in previous positions to solve seemingly intractable personnel issues?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How have you encouraged your employees to give you the bad news when they screw up?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What have been the most serious problems you have had with the people who have worked for you?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How have you encouraged and maintained an atmosphere of trust between yourself and your subordinates?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you had an employee who resisted authority. What did you do?” *[behavioral question]*
- “When a new employee joins your group, what steps do you normally take to get him or her settled in and accepted by the staff?” *[behavioral question]*
- “If you were to join the staff in a leadership role, how would you go about introducing yourself to the group so that your acceptance would be assured?” *[puzzle question]*
- “In situations in which you have added personnel to your staff, what steps did you take to prepare for the interviewing event?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you had to make a management decision regarding a serious infraction of company policy and no procedure or precedent existed.” *[behavioral question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

- “How have you structured opportunities for communication and interaction with your staff and for what purposes?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when staff morale was very low. What caused the low morale? What strategies did you use to turn things around?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What do you consider your key managerial strengths to be?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you suspected that a staff member was being less than honest with you about his or her activities. What did you do?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe a situation when you had to announce a very unpopular decision to your staff. How did you prepare? What happened after your announcement?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How have you handled poor employee performance?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What kinds of things have caused the most friction in your department? How have you handled those issues?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you became involved in an employee’s personal problems.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What management situation has proven to be the most difficult for you personally? Why?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What do you consider to be the most important attributes of a person functioning in a leadership role? Why?” *[puzzle question]*
- “How would you describe a constructive and productive atmosphere? What steps would you take to create such an environment?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about the biggest mistake you ever made regarding an employee.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about your management philosophy. Please provide a few examples of how that philosophy has been illustrated in your everyday activities.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What is your idea of a good boss? What is your idea of a good subordinate?” *[puzzle question]*
- “From the organization’s point of view, what are the three most important things a supervisor should provide or do for his or her organization? Why?” *[puzzle question]*
- “In the past, how have you ensured that your people trust and respect you?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What specific characteristics do you look for in the people you hire? Why?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Please describe the person who has been your favorite employee of all those who ever worked for you. What in particular did you value about him or her? What made the person so special?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Please paint a picture of the culture you will try to create in your department if we hire you.” *[puzzle question]*
- “What three or four expectations do you think this organization requires its supervisory and management personnel to fulfill?” *[puzzle question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

Management Style or Operating Style Used

Management style is the consistent pattern of behavior a person exhibits in attempting to influence the activities of others in achieving organizational goals. It is developed over time and is what others recognize as a personal style. Since a good management style in one situation may be a dismal failure in another, a strong candidate for a leadership position would know that there is no such thing as a best all-purpose management style. The most effective leaders are those who can vary their style according to the particular needs of the situation. Power is the hard side of leadership. A good candidate for a leadership role would know that using his or her authority for accomplishment rather than fear and domination is the mark of an effective leader. The following questions will help you assess the candidate's management style.

- “How would you describe your management style?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Looking back over all your experience as a manager, what would you say is the kind of management style that has drawn out the best results from your staff?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about an experience that substantially changed your operating style.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe a leader you admire and after whom you have patterned your own management style.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What role do you most enjoy playing at work?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Please describe the training and coaching strategies you have used in the past.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What experience have you had mentoring younger managers?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe the amount of structure and direction you typically provide to your staff.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Please paint a picture of the type of culture you would want to create here if we hired you. What specific steps would you take to establish that kind of culture?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What behaviors and attitudes in your staff members have you consistently encouraged? How did you go about doing that?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What kinds of behaviors and attitudes in your staff members have you consistently punished and attempted to eliminate? How did you go about doing that?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Please compare your operating style with that of others at your level. I'd be interested to hear what makes your management style unique.” *[puzzle question]*
- “What specific values and beliefs do you think your operating style shows?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What might others who have observed your operating style say about your management philosophy?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Give me some recent examples that illustrate your typical management or operating style.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What aspects of your management style have made you particularly effective in the leadership role? Please give me some examples.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What techniques have you used to motivate poor performers?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What strategies have you used to encourage individual staff members to meet and then exceed their potential?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Suppose you were asked to take over a department where performance was marginal, attitudes were poor, and there was little concern for quality. What specific strategies would you use to get things back on track?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about a time when your staff—usually able to take responsibility—were not responding well to major changes in the company's organizational structure. What did you do?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Suppose you were considering making major changes in the way your department was organized. In addition, suppose your staff had made some suggestions regarding what changes

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were needed. What steps would you take to ensure that resistance to the changes was minimized?" *[puzzle question]*

- "Under what circumstances have you managed your people by pointing out the alternative consequences of their decisions, supplying technical advice or facts when needed, but allowing them to make their own choices?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Under what circumstances have you determined the tasks, procedures, techniques, and activities for your staff, being careful not to confuse your people with too much information?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Under what circumstances have you allowed your staff complete latitude to determine their work priorities and activities and also took little or no part in their decision making as well?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Suppose you were asked to take over a department of outstanding performers who had been essentially functioning without anyone at the helm for several months. What would you do to put your personal stamp on things and make the department your own?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What do you believe is the appropriate role for a manager to play?" *[puzzle question]*
- "In what areas do you typically have the least amount of patience at work when it comes to staff problems? What you do when such situations occur?" *[behavioral question]*

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Motivation (Interest in This Type of Work or Industry)

A skilled candidate with a keen interest in the particular type of work or who is excited by the industry is far more likely to be a superior performer than someone who is merely looking for a job. You want someone with a compelling desire to achieve and who is constantly working to get better at what they do. Such a candidate would have an expanding track record within his or her field of endeavor. The following questions will help you assess the candidate's motivation.

- "What interests you about this particular position?" *[puzzle question]*
- "Why do you think this company might be the right one for you?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What excites you about this industry?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What particular skills and abilities have made you especially effective in doing this kind of work?" *[puzzle question]*
- "How would this position represent an advancement from the job you now currently hold?" *[puzzle question]*
- "Tell me about a time when you took on a difficult assignment for its developmental potential. What did you learn?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Describe a situation when you took on a challenge for which you were not adequately prepared. Why did you do it? What happened?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Why do you think this industry will continue to hold your interest over the long haul?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What have you done recently to become more effective at your current position?" *[behavioral question]*
- "How do you stay current in the field?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Describe for me what your ideal career will look like five years from now." *[puzzle question]*
- "Where do you think this industry is most vulnerable to the changes caused by the Internet in terms of advertising and marketing?" *[puzzle question]*
- "In terms of your career, what specifically would you like to gain as a result of your next position?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What would you like to accomplish here that you have not been able to accomplish in your current job?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What turns you on about this kind of work?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What specific circumstances brought you at this point in your career to decide to leave your current position?" *[puzzle question]*
- "How have your career motivations and interests changed over the years?" *[behavioral question]*
- "What first attracted you to this industry?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Tell me about a time when you were presented with a choice of promotional opportunities; one would expand your depth of knowledge, the other your leadership role. Which did you choose. Why?" *[behavioral question]*
- "What evidence can you point to that specifically illustrates your interest in this type of work?" *[behavioral question]*
- "In what way have your previous employment experiences convinced you that this is the right kind of occupation for you?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Describe a situation that illustrates your passion for this kind of work." *[behavioral question]*
- "What kinds of things have you done recently to expand your industry awareness knowledge?" *[behavioral question]*
- "What has motivated you to continue doing this kind of work?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Assuming you decided to remain with your current employer, what would be your next logical progression in terms of job responsibilities?" *[puzzle question]*

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Organization and Planning Skills (also see Time Management)

Organization and planning skills have to do with the manager's ability to establish a time management strategy for his or her department—one that guarantees the successful completion of the department's mission. Just as in personal time use, recognition that time is NOT a renewable resource and that effective planning is critical to a successful outcome separates the adequate manager from the superior one. In the interview situation, look for the candidate who has formulated some overall strategy for time use. The following questions can help you determine this.

- “Describe for me the process you use for planning.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What do you consider to be the primary reason for planning?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Suppose senior management told you to reorganize your department. What reasons would you assume the purpose of the reorganization was supposed to achieve?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about a time when planning got in the way of results.” *[behavioral question]*
- “How have you established your department's priorities in previous jobs?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Compare for me the process you use to establish your own personal priorities from the method you use to establish the priorities for your department.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What examples can you point to where on previous jobs your planning truly saved the day?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What strategies have you used to avoid ‘analysis paralysis’ in yourself and in your staff members?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What kind of organizational structure do you think is the most effective? Why?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Please walk me through the strategy you use for organizing and planning for major projects.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What specific strategies have you used so that your staff is not forced to work under intense pressure, even though upper management may have delayed giving you their work until the last possible minute?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when, despite all your planning and organization, the project assigned to your staff was seriously delayed.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What special techniques have you used to manage the work week of your staff so that both realistic deadlines and unexpected crisis were appropriately handled?” *[behavioral question]*
- “On your previous job, what targets was your department responsible for accomplishing? How did you ensure that those targets were reached? How did you arrange the mosaic of efforts by your individual staff members in the completion of those targets?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How have you encouraged your staff members to organize and plan their work?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What is your system for guaranteeing that the work of your staff is completed on time?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What tools have you used for organizing the work flow in your department?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Suppose you had a very talented and skilled employee who reveled in being disorganized and enjoyed the adrenal rush created by leaving things until the last possible minute. How would you attempt to change the person's behavior?” *[puzzle question]*
- “How far in advance do you typically make your planning decisions for the department? At what point do you tell the staff about your plans (or bring them into the planning process?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What special techniques do you use to schedule projects, assignments and vacations?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a recent departmental crisis.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Conventional management wisdom claims that effective planning avoids the syndrome of continually putting out fires. Give me a few examples that illustrate whether this has been true for you.” *[behavioral question]*

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- “Let’s say you were a consultant asked to advise some company on restructuring their organization. What would you target as the basis around which the reorganization should be structured?” *[puzzle question]*

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Personality Fit

In Chapter 8 of the book, it was suggested that you use several very open-ended and minimally structured questions to prompt the candidate into revealing which of three primary motivational drives propels most of the candidate's behavior. Here are twenty such questions with an indication of the likely responses from each of the three types of candidates described in Chapter 8.

- "Tell me about your most recent job."
- task-oriented candidate: prioritized or chronological list of job activities
- affiliation-oriented candidate: description of the personalities of co-workers
- power-oriented candidate: control of; in charge of; job title
- "What kinds of things make your work difficult?"
- task-oriented candidate: other people who are stupid, slow, or won't listen
- affiliation-oriented candidate: being overworked; long hours; working alone
- power-oriented candidate: being over-supervised; too much red tape
- "What do you consider your greatest strengths to be?"
- task-oriented candidate: hard worker; dedicated to excellence; quality work
- affiliation-oriented candidate: getting along well with other people
- power-oriented candidate: being able to take charge; to influence others
- "What kinds of things did you enjoy doing most at work?"
- task-oriented candidate: paperwork (detail work); working on the computer
- affiliation-oriented candidate: working with people; helping others
- power-oriented candidate: supervising others; working closely with senior management
- "Why does this job interest you?"
- task-oriented candidate: challenge; something new; opportunity to learn
- affiliation-oriented candidate: near my home; I've done it before; friends work here
- power-oriented candidate: good career move; represents advancement
- "Give me an example of a difficult problem you solved or decision you had to make."
- task-oriented candidate: describes a technical problem
- affiliation-oriented candidate: describes personal or interpersonal problem
- power-oriented candidate: describes some political intrigue or power maneuver
- "What are the most important qualities I should look for in a person to do this type of work?" (The candidate will describe him- or herself)
- task-oriented candidate: dependable, hard-working, self-starter, honest
- affiliation-oriented candidate: helpful, friendly, cooperative, likes people
- power-oriented candidate: has leadership potential, wants to move up, grow
- "What are the qualities you most admire in a boss or supervisor?"
- task-oriented candidate: appreciates and rewards good work; tough but fair
- affiliation-oriented candidate: is helpful, friendly, and understanding
- power-oriented candidate: is respected by others and is a strong leader
- "What do you do in your spare time?"
- task-oriented candidate: competitive non-team activities (tennis); attends night school; reads; surfs the Internet
- affiliation-oriented candidate: participates in team sports, spectator sports, support groups, and social groups
- power-oriented candidate: interested in politics, world affairs; leader of a team, group, or club; interested in investments and money
- "Describe a situation in which you successfully handled a customer service issue."
- task-oriented candidate: analyzed and solved a difficult, challenging problem within the established rules and procedures

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- affiliation-oriented candidate: empathetic, calmed the person down; apologized for any inconvenience
- power-oriented candidate: convinced the customer his or her way was the right way to solve the problem
- “How do you schedule your time?”
- task-oriented candidate: set priorities; use time management form or book
- affiliation-oriented candidate: just waits to see what’s happening
- power-oriented candidate: scheduling is done by the secretary
- “What kinds of things are important to you in a job?”
- task-oriented candidate: a chance to do interesting and challenging work; to expand skills and ability
- affiliation-oriented candidate: nice place to work where people are friendly and treat each other with respect
- power-oriented candidate: title and compensation appropriately reflecting my value to the organization
- “Describe the work environment in which you are the most comfortable.”
- task-oriented candidate: prefer working alone
- affiliation-oriented candidate: like being a member of a group
- power-oriented candidate: like being in charge of a group; team leader
- “How do you feel about mistakes?”
- task-oriented candidate: they should never happen
- affiliation-oriented candidate: we’re all human; shit happens
- power-oriented candidate: learn from it so it doesn’t happen again
- “What kind of feedback do you find most useful?”
- task-oriented candidate: specific instructions
- affiliation-oriented candidate: recognition and gratitude
- power-oriented candidate: tips on what I have to do to move ahead
- “How do you view rules and procedures?”
- task-oriented candidate: structure is good; always try to go by the book
- affiliation-oriented candidate: they don’t bother me
- power-oriented candidate: rules were made to be broken—at least bent
- “How do you regard organizational change?”
- task-oriented candidate: makes life interesting
- affiliation-oriented candidate: it’s always difficult and uncomfortable
- power-oriented candidate: inconvenient but may offer new opportunities
- “What wastes your time at work?”
- task-oriented candidate: interruptions
- affiliation-oriented candidate: last-minute rush jobs
- power-oriented candidate: doing things over
- “What do you like most about meetings?”
- task-oriented candidate: nothing; adjournment
- affiliation-oriented candidate: free donuts and coffee
- power-oriented candidate: chance to learn who’s doing what
- “How would you interpret the phrase ‘a quality result’?”
- task-oriented candidate: absolutely meticulous perfection
- affiliation-oriented candidate: reasonably good results
- power-oriented candidate: superior quality results

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

Persistence

Assessing how candidates will respond to difficult times is a very different issue from determining how they will react when everything is going smoothly. Sadly, the true measure of one candidate over another may not become evident until he or she is actually on the job and is confronted with a major roadblock. You want a person who, when confronted with obstacles, will keep going regardless of how difficult the situation may be. Such a person is resolute about completing whatever he or she starts. Such people are tenacious in achieving their goals despite any difficulties involved. The following questions will assist you in assessing the candidate's capacity for persistent effort in the face of obstacles.

- “Describe a work situation in which you faced incredible resistance to some idea or plan. Why was there so much opposition? What specific strategies did you use in attempting to overcome the resistance? What happened?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you gave up too soon.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe a situation when your continued persistence really paid off.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe for me how you keep yourself enthusiastic and motivated on long-term projects where success and completion may be years of hard effort away.” *[behavioral question]*
- “How have you dealt with other people's procrastination, especially when it impacts negatively on your work?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What specific hurdles have you overcome in your career to get where you are today?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Have people ever criticized you for being stubborn or inflexible? What is your interpretation of this complaint?” *[puzzle question]* “Please give me a few examples detailing how this complaint may have occurred.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What has been the most difficult project for you to see through to the end? What made completion so difficult?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Suppose you were in a situation in which you knew you were right but that the odds of winning others to your point of view were such that you felt you really should abandon your position. How long would you fight? What would tell you it was time to give up?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Describe a time when you tackled a tough and unpopular assignment. What were the obstacles you had to overcome?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Give me an example of how you went that extra mile on an assignment to ensure that all necessary bases were covered.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Give me an example of your perseverance in the face of tremendous odds.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Suppose you were heading up a project where things were not working out as planned. What would you do?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Why do you think persistence is an important quality in a manager?” *[puzzle question]*
- “In terms of expanding and honing your skills, in which area have you concentrated most of your learning efforts? What exactly have you been doing? Why did you choose this particular area in which to focus?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How do you stay current?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when your commitment to project completion was seriously compromised. How did you deal with that?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Sometimes influences beyond your control and outside your immediate working environment get in the way of completing an assignment. How have you dealt with this problem?” *[behavioral question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

Recent Graduate and Inexperienced Candidate

When looking at recent graduates (candidates with little or no work experience), you hope to find a person with the ability to learn quickly and/or someone with leadership and management potential. You want a candidate who already exhibits some decision-making ability, who realizes the importance of perseverance (time + effort = results), and who possesses some level of insight about people. The following questions target those issues.

- “What influenced you to seek a college (or high school) degree?” *[puzzle question]*
- “How did you happen to choose the college (or university) that you did?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What prompted you to pick your major course of study?” *[puzzle question]*
- “How was your education financed?” *[puzzle question]*
- “If you had any part-time jobs while in school or college, which one(s) did you find most interesting? Why?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What was your favorite course? Why? What was your least favorite course? Why?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What do you think will be the most valuable contribution your education will make to your life?” *[puzzle question]*
- “How do you think college (or school) has contributed to your personal development?” *[puzzle question]*
- “If you had the opportunity to do your school years over, is there anything you would do differently? Are there different choices you would make?” (If the candidate responds “Yes,” ask why.) *[puzzle question]*
- “How do you feel about the importance of grades in school (or college)? Of what value are grading systems? What do they show?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What subjects did you do best in? Why?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What subjects did you not handle as well as you would have liked? Why? What, if anything, did you do to strengthen your proficiency with those subjects?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What was it about the subjects in your major that made them especially appealing to you?” *[behavioral question]*
- “I’d be interested to learn about the most challenging situation you faced during your school (or college or university) years.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about your extracurricular activities. How did you happen to choose those particular areas of involvement? What did you learn about yourself from engaging in those activities?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How would you describe your level of academic achievement?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about your most rewarding school experience.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What have you learned about yourself from your school experience?” *[puzzle question]*
- “If you were hiring a recent graduate for this position, what qualities would you be looking for?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What have you done in school that would illustrate initiative?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How will this job help you reach your long-term personal and career goals?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about a time when your academic requirements came into conflict with other activities or interests. How did you resolve the conflict?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What did you like most/least about your educational experience?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What professor or teacher influenced you the most?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How have you been using your education?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Please give me some examples that illustrate how your education has affected your life so far.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What has been your biggest challenge during college or school?” *[behavioral question]*

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- “After four years of academic study, what are you most anxious to learn about now?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What have you learned from the choices you made during college or school?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What plans, if any, do you have for continuing your education?” *[puzzle question]*
- “When the demands of academic work—perhaps from multiple class requirements—came together at the same time, how did you handle the pressures of multiple priorities within a limited time frame?” *[behavioral question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

Salesmanship (Ability to Sell)

Of all the jobs in an organization, the job of salesperson is the most complex of all. Perhaps it is because customers must first buy into the salesperson before they will agree to purchase the product or service. Maybe it's because the approach to selling has changed so drastically over the past decade from adversarial to consultative. Then again, it may be because a good salesperson needs to possess so many diverse and contradictory skills: (1) listening and speaking skills, (2) product knowledge and people savvy, (3) selling acumen and market penetration strategies, (4) compelling but non-manipulative communication skills, (5) motivation to achieve high levels of individual performance along with a desire to serve the customer, (6) resiliency and integrity, and (7) being a self-starter who enjoys interacting with others. Here are some questions to help assess sales candidates.

- “Tell me about the toughest sale you ever made. Describe how you convinced your client to buy.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe one of the most significant proposals or solutions you have ever sold to a person or a company. What did it involve?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What are the three major reasons why a person might agree to purchase our products?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What do you know about our product line and about our customer base?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What do you like (or dislike) most about sales? Why?” *[puzzle question]*
- “How do you like to be rewarded?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How do you typically plan your day?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Please describe four qualities a good salesperson must have in order to be successful. Why do you think those qualities are important?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Please describe a day when everything seemed to be going wrong. How did you keep yourself motivated at a high energy level?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How does selling over the telephone differ from selling face-to-face? What special skills and techniques are necessary to be successful in selling by phone?” *[puzzle question]*
- “In your previous job, what techniques did you use to develop and maintain existing customers?” *[behavioral question]*
- “If you were developing a ‘salesmanship’ course for new recruits, what topics would you include? Why?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Walk me through the typical selling strategy or approach you would have used with a new customer on your previous job.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Please give me three compelling reasons why a person might buy a product or service—any product or service?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you were given a sizeable sales goal and a relatively short time frame in which to produce results. What steps did you take to ensure that the goal was achieved?” *[behavioral question]*
- “I’d be interested to hear about a time when you exceeded your sales goals. How did you achieve those results?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Typically, how long does it take you from the initial contact to close a sale?” *[behavioral question]*
“How might that time frame be shortened?” *[puzzle question]*
- “How would you turn an occasional buyer into a regular buyer?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you took over an existing territory or group of customers. How did you go about making it yours by putting your personal stamp on things?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What steps do you typically take to prepare for a sales call?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about your most difficult sale and/or most challenging customer.” *[behavioral question]*
- “How do you handle the paperwork and other assorted non-selling activities for which you are responsible?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Sell me this pen.” *[puzzle question]*

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- “In the past, what strategies and techniques have you utilized for identifying and securing customers for a new product?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What do you think are the most critical aspects of a sales call? Why?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Which do you prefer: dealing with existing customers or working with new ones? Why?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What do you think are the three most significant characteristics a customer expects and looks for from a salesperson?” *[puzzle question]*
- “How did you decide to become a salesperson?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe how you influenced a customer to purchase your higher priced product when they had been buying a similar, lower priced product from a competitor.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What qualities and skills make you unique among salespeople?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about a situation in which the customer acknowledged that your product or service was what the organization needed but that internal politics were pushing for an inferior, substandard product. The customer asked for your help. What did you do?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you made a commitment to a customer and because of someone else’s inaction or ‘screw up,’ you were unable to keep that commitment. What did you do? How did you explain it to the customer? What, if anything, did you do to prevent a similar situation in the future?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How do you feel about exaggerating a little in order to sell a product?” *[puzzle question]*
- “In what situations in the selling environment do you think total honesty would be inappropriate?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Describe a situation in which you were less than totally honest with a customer.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe a sales challenge about which you are particularly proud.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What has been your biggest challenge in working with customers?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Give me some specific examples of what you did when customers did not call you back as promised?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How have you dealt with customer procrastination or reluctance to make a decision?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How would you advise a new salesperson who was having trouble making cold calls?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Describe your most effective time management techniques.” *[behavioral question]*
- “How many hours per week do you find it necessary to work in order to get the job done at a level that meets your satisfaction?” *[puzzle question]*
- “In terms of your energy level, how would you evaluate your capacity for hustle?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What have you done to anticipate business trends that proved useful to you in selling?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe what would be the ideal compensation for you.” *[puzzle question]*
- “How would you like your pay to be determined?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me what you would like to get out of this job if you are hired.” *[puzzle question]*
- “What trends do you see going on in the industry that you believe will affect this company and our products?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What have you done to anticipate business trends that proved useful to you in selling?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What strategies have you used to gain an understanding of the customers’ needs?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What do you consider to be your greatest strength as a salesperson?” *[puzzle question]* “Please give me some examples that illustrate that ability.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What specific methods have you used to develop rapport with a customer?” *[behavioral question]*

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Self-Appraisal Questions

Questions of this type ask candidates to analyze their behavior, experiences, and skills from their own point of view. It provides an opportunity to discover what the candidate thinks of him- or herself. In addition, these questions can yield some insight into the candidate's self-image, level of self-esteem, self-awareness, and self-knowledge.

- "What do you think made you a valuable employee on your last job?" *[puzzle question]*
- "How would you describe yourself?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What skills do you have that you feel are most relevant to this position?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What kinds of things do you feel most confident in doing?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What five adjectives best describe you?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What do you consider your greatest strengths to be?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What motivates you to be successful?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What would your previous bosses say were the major factors or qualities that made you especially valuable to them?" *[puzzle question]*
- "How have you added value to your technical abilities and business knowledge over the years?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What inspires you?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What kinds of things aggravate you the most in a job?" *[puzzle question]*
- "How would you describe your 'boss's behavior'?" *[puzzle question]*
- "If you were sitting in my chair interviewing you, what would be your greatest concern regarding your overall qualifications for this position?" *[puzzle question]*
- "How do you evaluate your own performance?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What skills and personal resources do you feel have been the major contributors to your success up to now?" *[puzzle question]*
- "When people describe you, what qualities do they usually mention first?" *[puzzle question]*
- "How do you evaluate your effectiveness?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What are the basic factors that motivate you?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What would you say are your most important contributions to a job?" *[puzzle question]*
- "On what basis did your most recent employer evaluate your effectiveness?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What special skills would you be bringing to this job?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What skills are transferable from your present job to this job?" *[puzzle question]*
- "If hired, what would you contribute to this job that other candidates could not?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What accomplishment are you most proud of?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What kind of person do you think I should look for to fill this position?" *[puzzle question]*
- "What are the special characteristics that make you unique?" *[puzzle question]*
- "Why do you feel you would be good for this position?" *[puzzle question]*

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Self-Starter and Independent Thinker

A valuable quality to seek in any candidate is the ability to be self-motivated and self-governing. These are people who can function with a minimum of supervision and structure. They can also be relied on to see what needs to be done, and, without depending on someone or something else to nudge them along, will move ahead and do it. These people are called self-starters. Here are some questions designed to help you ascertain whether the candidate can work comfortably and effectively without structure and fully demonstrates independent thinking.

- “Suppose you were pressured to make a decision that was outside the normal limits of your authority and your boss was unavailable. What would you do?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you were presented with a project that had no history, guidelines, or structure other than a due date. How did you start?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Why are you interested in (or not interested in) greater responsibility?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Describe a situation when more responsibility was thrust on you unexpectedly.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What are you currently doing to improve your knowledge, skills, and effectiveness?” *[puzzle question]*
- “In previous jobs, what organizational problems have you tried to solve that were not specifically related to your job responsibilities?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What typically gives you the most satisfaction in a job?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about a situation in which you exceeded your authority and used your initiative to solve a difficult problem. I’d be interested in hearing about the kind of problem it was, how you went about solving it, and what management’s reaction was when it was over.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about the last time you broke the rules.” *[behavioral question]*
- “In your present position, what problems have you identified that had been previously overlooked? What, if anything, did you do about them?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about some of the changes that occurred in your last job because of you.” *[puzzle question]*
- “What kind of management style gets the best out of you?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What do you consider to be a ‘risky situation’ at work? Why?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about the biggest career risk you have ever taken on a job.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe a situation when you found it necessary to go ‘above and beyond the call of duty’ in order to get something done.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Suppose you were part of an organization that authorized ‘flex hours.’ You were allowed to set any schedule you wished as long as you worked a minimum of forty hours per week. How would you arrange your working hours? Why?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What kinds of things make your work difficult?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you really wanted to do something, but organizational structure or procedure stood in the way. What did you do?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What have you done to anticipate business trends or company plans that proved useful to you in planning your career development? What role have you played in the process of responsibility allocation?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Describe a project you were cajoled into managing but later wished you have not gotten involved with. What happened?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Give me an example of how you have had to reinvent yourself or redefine your responsibilities to meet the company’s changing needs.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about any lateral responsibilities you assumed on your own in your previous job. Why?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about any higher level responsibilities you assumed on your own in your previous job. How did those opportunities come about?” *[behavioral question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

- “What kind of mentoring style would you expect from your immediate supervisor?” *[puzzle question]*
- “How would you assess your ability to predict needs before they arise?” *[puzzle question]* “Please give me a few examples from your previous jobs.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a situation when your autonomy was critical to the successful completion of some assignment. How did you secure that autonomy?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you took action without getting prior approval.” *[behavioral question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

Selling The Job

The ideal candidate is seated before you; he or she has the right background, education, training, and attitude. Now you must entice the candidate to join your company. Most interviewers jump right in by explaining how great they think their organization is and what a terrific opportunity the particular position is without ever trying to discover what it is that the candidate thinks is appealing. Unless you find out what is important to the candidate, there is no way you will be able to sell him or her on joining your organization. Here are some questions that will uncover what is important to the candidate. (Remember, however, that if your organization cannot provide those things the candidate thinks are important and you manipulate the candidate into accepting the position anyway, you have guaranteed a turnover statistic.)

- “What do you hope to find here that you haven’t found at your previous job?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What is important to you about having that in a job?” *[puzzle question]*
- “How would you know that this organization could provide those opportunities for you?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What would it look like to you if this organization had the potential for giving you that kind of challenge (or responsibility or freedom or whatever it is that the candidate says he or she wants)?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What would you need to know in order to be confident that this job would give you those things?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What has gotten in the way of other jobs being able to give you these things?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What kind of effort did you make to try to initiate those opportunities for yourself at other jobs?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What were the typical obstacles that prevented other organizations from offering those kinds of opportunities to you?” *[puzzle question]*
- “If you could construct this job exactly the way you would want it, what would it look like?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What would convince you that we have the ideal job for you?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Under what conditions would you be willing to accept this position?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What would have to change at your present position in order for you to continue working there?” *[puzzle question]*
- “There are three factors present in every job: the position, the organization, and the people with whom one works. Which of those three factors has played the most significant role in terms of your job satisfaction?” *[behavioral question]*
- “How would you know that this organization could make a real difference in your career by helping you to reach your personal goals?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What kind of responsibilities would you want to assume in this job? What type of responsibilities would you like to avoid?” *[puzzle question]*

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

Strategist, Risk Taker, and Political Astuteness (Sees the Big Picture)

Candidates who are good strategists never lose sight of the larger objectives associated with their jobs and the organization's fundamental position in the marketplace. They identify complex situations and seek solutions that advance the organization's primary goals (such as increasing quality service, expanding growth, and improving profitability). Such individuals are politically astute in conflict situations; they are quick to identify common areas of agreement when controversies occur over such things as priorities and division of scarce resources. Such individuals are also sensitive to the political issues within an organization and will evaluate any decisions they make accordingly. This type of candidate would come to the interview armed with in-depth knowledge of the industry and the major issues confronting it in the marketplace. Here are some questions that may help in identifying such individuals.

- "Tell me about a time when you identified a fundamental problem or misconception underlying your organization's policy and/or practice. What did you prescribe as a more effective approach?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Describe some organizational objectives that were given to your department or area. How did you and your group accomplish some of those objectives?" *[behavioral question]*
- "How would you ensure that the company's vision, mission, and purpose were reflected in any goals set by you for yourself and your staff?" *[puzzle question]*
- "In the past, when you were faced with making a politically risky decision, what factors did you consider before moving ahead?" *[behavioral question]*
- "What has been the biggest business risk you have taken with your career? What made it risky?" *[behavioral question]*
- "What has been the biggest political risk you have taken in a job? What made it risky? What evaluation process did you go through before moving ahead?" *[behavioral question]*
- "At any time in your career have you taken a calculated political risk that turned out poorly? What did you learn from that situation that you have carried forward to future situations?" *[behavioral question]*
- "If you were advising a new manager about the political risks that are often a part of every corporate culture, what would you tell him or her?" *[puzzle question]*
- "Describe a situation in which you participated in problem-solving efforts designed to rectify an issue that was impacting the entire organization negatively. *[behavioral question]*
- "When you are making decisions, how do you go about determining how those decisions will impact other parts of the organization?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Suppose management told you to downsize your staff by 20 percent. On what basis would you decide who remained and who to let go?" *[puzzle question]*
- "Tell me about a time when short-term responsibilities clashed with long-term ones. How did you determine which took priority?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Tell me about a time when you were faced with a crisis while you were simultaneously involved in something else that was extremely important. How did you decide what to do?" *[behavioral question]*
- "What do you think are the most important issues that will face this industry in the next ten years? How are you preparing yourself to deal with those changes?" *[puzzle question]*
- "On previous jobs, what was the basis on which you determined to take on tasks, projects, or responsibilities that were not assigned to you or even expected of you?" *[behavioral question]*
- "What influenced you to seek a new employment opportunity at this point in your career?" *[behavioral question]*
- "Suppose you made a decision and things did not turn out well. How would you determine what piece you missed in your original analysis?" *[puzzle question]*
- "Under what circumstances have you evaluated how the decisions made in your area might impact other groups in the organization? How and when was that to be accomplished?" *[behavioral question]*

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- “Describe the process you used on previous jobs for planning out the overall objectives for the people you manage.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Let’s suppose that the organization for which you work has a sacred cow policy that no one is ever fired no matter what. However, you have a really poor performer in your area. What would you do?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Describe a work situation in which you knew you were right but the odds of winning others to your point of view were slim. What was your strategy?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What are the major influences that shape your day-to-day work-related decisions?” *[puzzle question]*
- “In your last job, what kind of outside influences tended to shape internal policy? What kind of impact did this have on you and your job?” *[puzzle question]*
- “In your previous position, how did your job fit into the company’s overall business plan? How do you know that?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about a time when you recognized a potentially very serious problem while it was still on the horizon. How did you identify it? What did you do?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What is going on in this industry today that is likely to affect this company tomorrow?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What changes are taking place in the marketplace today that will fundamentally change the way we do business tomorrow?” *[puzzle question]*
- “In previous jobs, what kind of political roadblocks or sacred cows did you run into? What strategies did you use for dealing with them?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What kind of sensitive political issues have you had to deal with on previous jobs?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What have been the most frustrating issues you have had with the organizations for which you worked?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Suppose you were stepping into a top-level position in an organization that had a reputation for both political infighting and skeletons in the corporate closet. What steps would you take to avoid getting mired in those issues before you were fully cognizant of them?” *[puzzle question]*
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Team Player

Experience on a team does not automatically qualify a candidate as a good team player. Working with others in a team setting requires strong human relations skills, some knowledge of negotiation techniques, an ability to put team goals before personal agendas, and a willingness to compromise. Many people find their way onto teams totally devoid of all those prerequisites. As a result, they cause all kinds of problems that eventually affect the group's productivity negatively. You want a person who can work cooperatively with peers to achieve shared objectives; someone who knows how to collaborate; and someone who understands that team process (the human relations component) is every bit as important as the team's tasks and mission. Here are some questions that can help the assessment process.

- "What has been your experience functioning as a peer member of a team?" [behavioral question]
- "What has been your experience functioning as the leader of a team?" [behavioral question]
- "What has been the most insightful piece of learning you have gained from participating in a team effort? How have you used that learning in succeeding situations?" [behavioral question]
- "What specific difficulties have you found to be fairly common in all the team experiences you have had?" [behavioral question]
- "What do you consider to be the most important attribute of a good supervisor whose people work in teams? Why?" [puzzle question]
- "Tell me about the most creative challenge you were involved with in a team setting. What incentives were used to motivate you and the group?" [behavioral question]
- "Describe a situation when you were a member of a team that had to set its own performance parameters. What role did you play in the process?" [behavioral question]
- "In your previous work experience as a peer professional member of a team, how were leadership issues typically resolved?" [behavioral question]
- "Conflict between team members is not uncommon. What has been your experience with conflict resolution in a team setting where outside intervention was not utilized?" [behavioral question]
- "Should one peer team member be able to ask another team member to do something without giving an explanation? Why or why not?" [puzzle question]
- "Tell me what you like most/least about working in a team setting." [behavioral question]
- "Tell me about the most difficult situation you faced as a team member. How was that situation resolved? What role did you play in the resolution process?" [behavioral question]
- "Describe for me the circumstances under which you have worked most effectively on a team." [behavioral question]
- "What is your idea of a good team player?" [puzzle question]
- "Tell me about your experience functioning as a team facilitator." [behavioral question]
- "In your experience, how was team self-governance achieved?" [behavioral question]
- "Recall a time when you were on a team when one member was overly sensitive and highly emotional. How did you and the team deal with that person?" [behavioral question]
- "Recall a time when you were on a team when one member continually monopolized the team's meetings. How did you and the team deal with that person?" [behavioral question]
- "Tell me about a time when you put forth a sound proposal to your team members and the group rejected your idea. What did you do?" [behavioral question]
- "What are the major differences between being an effective employee and being an effective team member?" [puzzle question]
- "In your experience, what kinds of problems is a team likely to experience when one member is late to meetings excessively or doesn't fulfill his or her commitments? How were those issues dealt with?" [behavioral question]
- "Tell me about a time when one team member did not carry his or her own weight. As a peer member of the group, what, if anything, did you try to do to ameliorate the situation?" [behavioral question]

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

- “From management’s point of view, what do you think are the three most important things a team should provide or do for an organization?” [puzzle question]
- “What qualities, behaviors, and attitudes should one team member expect and receive from other members?” [puzzle question]
- “In your experience, what have been the major advantages of working as part of a team?” [behavioral question]
- “In your experience, what have been the major disadvantages of working as part of a team?” [behavioral question]
- “Tell me about a time when you had the responsibility for facilitating a group.” [behavioral question]
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Time Management

No one ever claims to have enough time, yet we already have all the time there is. Quantity is not the problem. The problem is how one goes about utilizing that inflexible resource. What time management is really all about is managing oneself. Effective utilization of time separates the adequate employee or manager from the superior one. This important resource is often squandered or poorly utilized because the person has never formulated an overall strategy designed (1) to expand his or her productivity by evaluating priorities and (2) to develop techniques that effectively identify and control those things that waste their time. You want a candidate who knows how to manage him- or herself so that he or she makes maximum use of this critical resource. In the interview situation, look for the candidate who has formulated some overall strategy for time use. The following questions can help you determine this.

- “Give me an example of how you traditionally plan your day or week.” [behavioral question]
- “What do you think is the most significant piece of information regarding time management that a person ought to understand?” [puzzle question]
- “What has been your basic strategy for approaching a huge workload that is to be accomplished within an inadequate time frame?” [behavioral question]
- “How should an effective person (or manager or supervisor) determine his or her priorities?” [puzzle question]
- “Give me an example of a time when short-term responsibilities clashed with long-term responsibilities. How did you determine which took priority?” [behavioral question]
- “Tell me about a time when you were faced with a crisis while you were involved in something that was extremely important. How did you apportion your time?” [behavioral question]
- “Interruptions are a fact of life at work. What strategies have you used in the past for dealing with them?” [behavioral question]
- “What was the toughest time management problem you ever faced? Why did you find it so difficult? How did you attempt to deal with it?” [behavioral question]
- “What frustrates you the most about being interrupted?” [puzzle question]
- “Tell me about a time when you worked for a manager who assigned work at the very last possible minute. How did you deal with the difficulties that this created?” [behavioral question]
- “How many things can you do successfully at the same time?” [puzzle question]
- “Tell me about a time when your boss volunteered you for a task in another area that was unrelated to your current responsibilities and which would put you behind in terms of your own assignments. How did you manage that situation?” [behavioral question]
- “Suppose you were involved in a task that was estimated to reach completion with one week’s worth of effort. Half-way through, you realized that even with three weeks of effort, the project could not be accomplished. What options might be available to you for dealing with that situation? Which one would you choose? Why?” [puzzle question]
- “What tangible evidence can you point to as proof that you know how to manage your time well?” [behavioral question]
- “What new ideas or creative strategies have you put in place that were designed to save time?” [behavioral question]
- “What have been your guiding principles regarding time management? Please give me a few examples that illustrate these principles in action.” [behavioral question]
- “What were the five major components of your previous jobs? How did you determine how much time to spend on each?” [behavioral question]
- “Tell me about the challenges you have faced in getting all the facets of your job responsibilities adequately handled within the allotted time frame.” [behavioral question]
- “Tell me about a time when you were managing a complicated project. What specific strategies did you use in your planning?” [behavioral question]
- “What has been the most critical time management issue you faced in a job? How did you overcome the difficulty?” [behavioral question]

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Versatility

Versatility in a candidate is a valuable asset to any organization. Versatile candidates are able to assume a large assortment of different responsibilities because they have talent, skills, knowledge, or ability in a number of different areas. Versatility also refers to someone who knows how to alter his or her operating style in order to achieve personal and organizational goals or to gain cooperation from others. Here are some questions that target these abilities.

- “Tell me about a time when you modified your operating style so that you could respond more effectively to the needs of another person.” [behavioral question]
- “Describe a situation in which you modified your customary behavioral style so that you could work effectively with a person whom you did not like.” [behavioral question]
- “On previous jobs, what type of person have you found is most difficult to work with? What did you do to work successfully with such a person?” [behavioral question]
- “Tell me about a time when your boss volunteered you for a task in another area that was unrelated to your current responsibilities and that would put you behind in terms of your own assignments. How did you manage that situation?” [behavioral question]
- “Describe an occasion on which you had to juggle multiple priorities from different areas of the business.” [behavioral question]
- “Tell me about the variety of assignments with which you were involved on your previous job. I’d be interested to learn whether these assignments were sequential or simultaneous.” [behavioral question]
- “Tell me about a situation in which more responsibility—outside your normally assigned work—was thrust on you unexpectedly.” [behavioral question]
- “Suppose you were given a project that required you to learn a new skill. How would you start?” [puzzle question]
- “Tell me about a time when your boss presented you with a task that was unrelated to your job and that put you behind in terms of your regular responsibilities. What did you do?” [behavioral question]
- “Tell me about a time when you were in the middle of a project and your boss required your expertise on another task. What did you do about the first project?” [behavioral question]
- “Describe a situation for which there was a good deal to learn before you were up-to-speed and you were facing a tight time frame. What strategies did you use to learn and then accomplish the task within the assigned time frame?” [behavioral question]
- “Let us say that you had a keen interest in taking part in what looked like a very exciting project that was distinctly outside your area of responsibility. What steps would you take to get yourself involved?” [puzzle question]
- “Describe for me how you have had to reinvent yourself and your skill set in order to meet the company’s changing needs.” [behavioral question]
- “Tell me about any proactive steps you have taken in the past in order to assume broader responsibilities outside your area of expertise.” [behavioral question]
- “Give me an example of a situation in which the organization asked you to take over an unexpected and unwanted assignment. What did you do?” [behavioral question]
- “Tell me about a time when you were forced to assume responsibilities that were distinctly outside your assigned commitments, experience, and knowledge. How did you set things up so that you would succeed?” [behavioral question]
- “Tell me about a time when short-term responsibilities clashed with long-term responsibilities. How did you determine which took priority?” [behavioral question]
- “Suppose you were involved with a crisis in your own area and someone from another area needed your expertise on something that was extremely important to the organization. What would you do?” [puzzle question]

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- “Please tell me about the kinds of activities you were involved with on previous jobs that were NOT a part of your regular work responsibilities. I’d be interested to learn how you happened to become involved with those particular tasks.” [behavioral question]
- “What were the tasks or assignments in your last job that allowed you to try out new ways of doing things or depended on you to come up with innovative ideas?” [behavioral question]
- “Describe a problem for which your first solution did not work and for which your second approach was very unusual. How did you come up with that second approach?” [behavioral question]
- “What kinds of challenges have you faced in your career that compelled you to look at other disciplines or fields for the solutions?” [behavioral question]

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

Why The Candidate Is Making a Job Change (Also see Selling the Job, Ambition, and Career Goals)

Most candidates will paint a rosy picture regarding their skills, value, and abilities. You find yourself wondering, “If this person is so fantastic, how come the current employer doesn’t see it?” The candidate assures you that he or she is not being forced out by the present employer due to poor performance or economic belt tightening; it is a personal decision to leave. The assumption, then, is that the present job is somehow no longer meeting this person’s needs or goals. In order to properly assess the candidate’s suitability for your job, you must find out what his or her goals are and then decide whether your position will satisfy those goals. Here are some questions designed to evaluate that issue.

- “I’d be interested to learn what influenced your decision to make a job change at this point in your career.” [behavioral question]
- “In what ways has your present employment situation contributed to your desire to seek a new job opportunity?” [behavioral question]
- “What are some of the reasons why you are considering leaving your present job?” [puzzle question]
- “How have you shared your dissatisfaction with your current employer?” [behavioral question]
- “Under what circumstances would you remain at your present job?” [puzzle question]
- “What do you hope to find here that you haven’t been able to find at your present job?” [puzzle question]
- “What would have to change at your present position in order for you to continue working there?” [puzzle question]
- “Why is it important to you to have that in a job?” [puzzle question]
- “How would you be able to tell whether this organization could provide those opportunities for you?” [puzzle question]
- “What would it look like to you if this organization had the potential of giving you that kind of challenge (or responsibility or freedom or whatever it is that the candidate says he or she wants)?” [puzzle question]
- “What do you think has prevented your present employer from being able to provide you with those things?” [puzzle question]
- “What kind of effort did you make to try to initiate those opportunities for yourself at your present job?” [behavioral question]
- “Please describe for me the difference between what your present job offers you and what you would like your ideal job to offer you.” [puzzle question]
- “If you could construct this job exactly the way you would want it, what would it look like?” [puzzle question]
- “How likely is it that your present employer will make you a counteroffer in an effort to entice you to remain with them? What might such an offer look like?” [puzzle question]
- “Under what conditions would you be willing to accept this position?” [puzzle question]
- “Under what conditions would you be willing to remain with your current employer?” [puzzle question]
- “There are three factors present in every job: the position, the organization, and the people with whom one works. Which of those three factors has played the most significant role in terms of your job satisfaction?” [behavioral question]
- “What kind of responsibilities would you want to assume in this job? What type of responsibilities would you like to avoid?” [puzzle question] “How does your selection of preferred responsibilities differ from those in your present job?” [behavioral question]
- “Please describe what has been a conducive work atmosphere for you.” [behavioral question]
- “For what reasons have you left previous jobs?” [behavioral question]

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- “How long does it generally take for you to realize that the organization for which you are working is unable to meet your needs and goals?” [behavioral question]
- “What has been the major contributing factor that convinced you your present position no longer held any promise or potential for you?” [behavioral question]
- “Tell me about the specific events or incidents that contributed the most to your decision to seek another employment position.” [behavioral question]
- “What two or three things do you feel you learned about yourself from your present position?” [puzzle question]
- “What do you particularly like/dislike about your present position?” [puzzle question]

Interview Questions Listed By Competency

Work Environment Preferred (Management Style of Boss Preferred; Job Satisfaction, Assessing What Contributes to)

Something the candidate wants very badly is missing in his or her present employment situation. If he or she were thoroughly and completely satisfied with the current employment situation, he or she would not be sitting in front of you. In order to make sure there is a good fit between the candidate and your organization, you need to know what the candidate thinks is missing from his or her current employment situation. Perhaps the candidate does not like the way he or she is being managed. Maybe the tasks are no longer fulfilling or challenging. Perhaps the environment is no longer conducive or comfortable for sustained effort. The following questions are designed to help you obtain a clear picture of the environment in which the candidate feels fulfilled.

- “From the standpoint of job responsibilities, which of your past positions did you find most fulfilling? Why? Which of your past positions did you find least fulfilling? Why?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What type of work have you found to be the most personally rewarding and stimulating?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Which of your past positions did you find most challenging? Which of your past positions did you find the least challenging?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Please describe for me the type of work responsibilities you most enjoy being involved with.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What has your experience taught you about the type of work responsibilities you least enjoy doing?” *[behavioral question]*
- “Please describe for me what your ideal job would look like.” *[puzzle question]*
- “What are the factors that have the most influence on your level of job satisfaction?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What are the elements that describe an ideal work environment for you?” *[puzzle question]*
- “In previous jobs, what kinds of factors have caused you unhappiness and dissatisfaction with a position?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What kind of environment demotivates you?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Please describe the work environment in which you believe you did your best work. I’d be interested to learn what variables contributed most to your sense of accomplishment.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What does a job have to entail in order to satisfy you?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What aspects of a job do you find most attractive? Why?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What gives you the greatest satisfaction from a job?” *[puzzle question]*
- “If you could write your own job description, what would you include in it?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Please tell me about the best job you ever had. What made it ‘the best’?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What is important for you to have in a job?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What management ‘style’ gets the best out of you?” *[puzzle question]*
- “How much of a management role do you need to produce good results?” *[puzzle question]*
- “How do you like to be supervised?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Tell me about the worst manager you ever had. I’d be interested in learning what made the situation especially uncomfortable for you.” *[behavioral question]*
- “Tell me about the best manager you ever had. I’d be interested in hearing about the qualities and techniques he or she used that you found to be personally beneficial.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What would you say is the most important thing you are looking for in a job? How would you know that we could provide you with that?” *[puzzle question]*
- “If you had all the money you could ever use and you still wanted to ‘keep busy,’ what would you choose to do?” *[puzzle question]*

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- “If you could construct this job exactly the way you would want it, what would it look like?” *[puzzle question]*
- “There are three factors present in every job: the position, the organization, and the people with whom one works. Which of those three factors has played the most significant role in terms of your job satisfaction?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What kind of responsibilities would you want to assume in this job? What type of responsibilities would you like to avoid?” *[puzzle question]*
- “I’d be interested to learn what influenced your decision to make a job change at this point in your career.” *[behavioral question]*
- “In what ways has your present employment situation contributed to your desire to seek a new job opportunity?” *[behavioral question]*
- “What are some of the reasons why you are considering leaving your present job?” *[puzzle question]*
- “Please describe what has been a conducive work atmosphere for you.” *[behavioral question]*
- “What are some things you would want to avoid in future jobs? Why?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What would you say was the most promising job you ever had? Why?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What did you particularly like/dislike about your last (previous) position?” *[puzzle question]*
- “What would it look like to you if this organization had the potential for giving you that kind of challenge (or responsibility or freedom or whatever it is that the candidate says he or she wants)?” *[puzzle question]*